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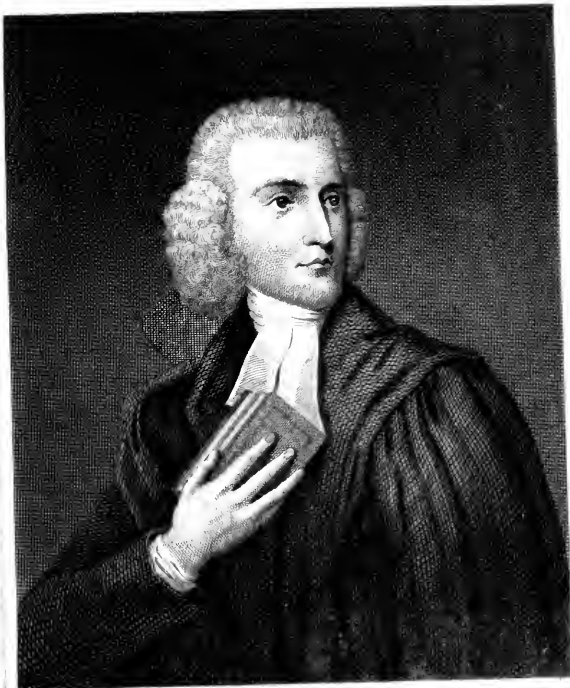
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No. II.

HALYBURTON'S WORKS.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.





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REV. THOS. HALIBURTON

PUBLISHED BY BLACKIE & SON GLASGOW.

THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON;

CONTAINING,

THE GREAT CONCERN OF SALVATION—
TREATISE ON NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION—
COMMUNION SERMONS—AND MEMOIRS.

WITH

AN ESSAY ON HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BURNS, D. D.

PAISLEY.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

THE Publishers have much pleasure in laying before the public, as the second of their series of the **CHRISTIAN LIBRARY**, the first complete edition of the works of Halyburton. The works of this justly celebrated man have endeared his memory to all those who have at heart the interest of true and undefiled religion—from the rare combination they exhibit of Christian humility and devotion, and acute reasoning powers exercised in his defence of Christianity. His writings present to our view an admirable specimen of sound doctrine, accuracy of reasoning, and sublime, vital, and practical views of the gospel of our Saviour; and his life, as recorded by himself in these pages, displays great spirituality of feeling, the elevated experience of an enlightened mind, and the application of knowledge on religious subjects to his heart and his habits. His religion was not of that speculative kind which rests contented with theory, nor of that philosophical description which is satisfied with the mere performance of social duties; he knew, felt, and exhibited the necessity of regeneration, or the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of Christ, to fit us to become the children of God. The learning and talent he displayed, in his advocacy of the cause of truth against the erroneous notions of several deists of his day, abundantly prove the futility of the notions of those who imagine, that high intellectual attainments are incompatible with what the world calls enthusiasm in religion. The learned editor's excellent preface contains a very just appreciation of the merits of Halyburton, and will abundantly repay a careful and attentive perusal. To render this edition more generally useful, a translation has been given of the Latin and Greek quotations frequently occurring throughout the work, and which, though now uncommon, were very usually introduced into public addresses in Halyburton's day. The Publishers trust that the author's "testimony to the truth of the gospel and the power of godliness, given with a living pen and with dying lips," may be instrumental in producing in many "the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THERE are two extremes into which professing Christians of the present day are very apt to fall. While one class adopt a system of doctrinal sentiments without any practical regard to their influence on the heart and on the life ; another satisfy themselves with the simple performance of social duties. Into the religious scheme of the former, there enter few, if any, of those holy affections, and little of that sublime practical virtue which the gospel requires. Into the scheme of the latter, there enter few of the leading principles of the Christian revelation, and a very small portion of that spirituality of sentiment and of feeling, which constitutes the very essence of vital godliness. The religion of both is alike cold and inefficient. Doctrinal truth must indeed lie at the very foundation of all true piety ; and no man can cultivate the spirit and practise the duties of religion, without a clear and scriptural knowledge of the truths of God. But it ought never to be forgotten, that the doctrines of the gospel are all highly practical in their tendency, and that we cannot be said to hold them at all, if we “ hold them in unrighteousness.” We lose sight of their great original design. We pervert them to our own selfish and unholy purposes ; and in so doing, we evince an alienation from the love of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The religion which terminates in theory, and that which satisfies itself with the performance of social duties, are alike remote from the holy system of the Bible. The one fills the mind with notions, and inflates it with intellectual pride ; the other gratifies the selfish conceit of personal virtue, while it sets aside all the great principles of real godliness. The one lays hold of those truths which are designed and fitted to operate as incentives to holiness, but it fails to carry them out to their legitimate applications : the other satisfies itself with a part of religion in place of the whole, and separates the love of our neighbour from the love of God. In both, the grand features of true godliness are overlooked. Cold mental abstractions are substituted in place of vital practical principles ; and the morality of a Seneca and an Epictetus is set forth as a counterpart to that of Christ and his apostles.

There is reason to fear lest the style of public instruction, which many

preachers of the gospel have of late years adopted, should tend to encourage these low and defective views of real religion. We allude to that species of pulpit address which speaks to the understanding alone ; which exhibits religious truth in the form of logical discussion and well-arranged argument ; and which sacrifices unction and pathetic appeal for the sake of minute accuracy and elegant diction. Popular discourses are thus made to assume the form of philosophical dissertations ; and the aim of the preacher seems to be to convince rather than to persuade. Now, it is perfectly true, that the man whose province it is to plead for God and for truth, ought to address the judgment and the rational powers ; and if he fails to do so, he is in danger of substituting empty declamation in place of solid and scriptural instruction. Let it, however, be remembered, that in the present day we have more to do with practical infidelity than with absolute ignorance ; and that the reason why religion is at so low an ebb amongst us, may be traced rather to disinclination of heart than to sceptical heterodoxy. The preacher of truth must state, illustrate, and vindicate its claims on the understanding and the judgment ; but he has only accomplished one half of his office if he seeks not to secure for it a safe and permanent lodgment in the conscience and the heart. With this twofold end in view, he must unite warmth of address with clearness of statement ; impassioned appeals to the conscience, with sound arguments to the understanding ; and the direct application of motives, with their perspicuous exhibition in theory. We cannot conceive a greater danger to which the souls of men are exposed, than when the hearers of the gospel are left to infer the safety of their state from the soundness of their creed. The doctrinal articles of a theological system are one thing ; the vital principles of the same system applied to the heart and to the habits, are quite another. It is the part of abstract discussion to analyse and establish the doctrinal articles ; it belongs to hortatory and pastoral theology to unfold and apply the practical principles. If we confine ourselves to the work of analysis and explanation, we are in extreme hazard of tempting men to measure their progress in the Christian life by the clearness of their apprehensions, rather than by the moral amelioration of their habits. Theory may thus take place of solid and steady principle. A barren orthodoxy of sentiment may thus be confounded with practical submission to the entire and undivided scheme of grace. The *doctrine* of regeneration may thus be readily embraced as scriptural and true, while the very men who thus embrace it as an article in their creed, may practically shrink from the solemn decision of the Saviour—"Ye *must* be born again !"

We apprehend that the difference between evangelical preaching, and that which is called moderate or legal, does not, when fairly and fully brought out, resolve itself into the mere technical distinctions which are

marked by the terms *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*. It is perfectly possible to construct a scheme of doctrine in all respects scriptural, while there may be nothing in it that is calculated to give offence to the carnal mind or to rouse the sleeping conscience. The fashion of the present day is rather favourable than otherwise to such orthodox exhibitions of Christianity; and hence it is, that few, comparatively, propound from our pulpits the dogmas of Pelagian or Socinian heresy. Only allow to religion the province of the understanding alone, and it makes little difference whether it shall be regaled with the realities of truth, or with the figments of error. If speculation is all that is aimed at, the love of it may be gratified by statements that are substantially sound, as well as by the creations of mere fancy. Abstracted from the practical tendency of the doctrines of evangelical truth, there is nothing in their theoretical exhibition that is peculiarly calculated to excite the determined opposition of the carnal mind; and so long as nothing is designed beyond a simple exposé of them as materials of thinking, “the offence of the cross” will neither be very violent nor very long continued. The *real* cause of that enmity which the “natural man” cherishes and expresses towards the things of God, is to be found in the holy, humbling, heart-searching, and self-annihilating tendency of the gospel of the grace of God; and the essential difference between evangelical and moderate preaching, consists in the prominence which is given by the one to the scriptural doctrine of conversion, compared with the absolute reticence of the other on this cardinal principle of Christianity. Even the self-denying doctrine of imputed righteousness will not excite very virulent hostility on the part of corrupted men, so long as it is not exhibited in connexion with the absolute necessity of a radical and universal change of sentiment and of character, before we can “enter into the kingdom of heaven.” It is the doctrine of free, sovereign, and regenerating grace, enlightening the mental eye, and changing the current of the heart’s affections, convincing the man of his absolute nothingness in the sight of God, and of his utter destitution of all godliness—awakening him to a sense of his sin and danger, and prompting him to cry out with holy anxiety of spirit, “What shall I do to be saved?” it is this spiritual and practical view of the Christian remedy for man’s moral diseases, together with the tone of deep seriousness and impassioned fervour with which it is proclaimed, that rouses the hostility of men, and leads them to characterize evangelical preaching as wild and enthusiastic. We may preach orthodox doctrine according to our standards, as long and as clearly as we please; and provided we only discuss and reason with the calm composure of the intellectual philosopher, no offence will be given or taken. It is not so much the mere statement of truth that gives offence, as the manner in which the truth is applied. It is not the appeal to the understanding that will irritate; it is rather the

attempt to probe the conscience. It is not the general exhibition of certain peculiar opinions that rouses indignation; it is rather the minute and searching application of principles to insulated individuals. This it is that constitutes the life and soul of practical experimental preaching; and to this the "hard" and "desperately wicked heart" of unrenewed man will ever be sternly opposed.

Bishop Maltby, a very learned, but very heterodox divine of the church of England, has told us in one of his sermons, that "the offence of the cross" is a thing totally unknown in these halcyon days. "Since," says he, "it is no longer discreditable to profess our faith in Christ, we cannot incur the hazard of opposing or offending our nearest and dearest connexions. A man no longer encounters foes among his own household: he is not obliged to renounce the regard and affection of his family because he believes in Christ; and therefore the warning which our Lord found it necessary to give in those days and in that country, has *no meaning*, if applied literally in our own." The "warning" alluded to by the preacher is contained in these affecting words of him who "spake as never man spake:"—"Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Of this warning the reverend divine has been pleased to affirm that "it has *no meaning*" if applied to modern times. In other words, the believer has in these days and in this beloved land, nothing in the way of a "cross" or trial to bear, arising out of the profession he makes as a follower of Jesus. It is worthy of remark, that the terms of the statement, even as made originally by our blessed Lord himself, were figurative. It was not *literally* true of every individual believer in those times, that he had to bear the *cross* in the same manner as his blessed Lord did bear it, when he went up to the scene of his ignominious and cruel death. The expression was obviously designed to forewarn the followers of Jesus of the trials they might be called to endure, in consequence of their embracing the gospel; and the test of their sincerity is, the readiness with which they "denied themselves," and submitted to the persecutions which awaited them.

True it is, that the profession of the gospel does not now expose to trials of precisely the same kind, or the same degree of severity. The arm of secular persecution is not now stretched out against the humble followers of the Lamb. We dwell under the fostering wing of a mild and tolerant administration. Christianity is "part and parcel" of the constitution of the country. Its institutes have been incorporated with the civil statutes of the realm; and while legal provision has been made for the due celebration of its ordinances throughout the length and the breadth of the land, every man, whether availing himself of that provision or not, is permitted "to sit under his vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid."

Still we demur to the assertion, that the Christian believer has *now* "no cross" to bear. "The carnal mind" is still "enmity against God;" and "he that would be the friend of the world must be the enemy of God." A cold and formal profession of the faith of Christ may indeed consist with perfect immunity from every thing approaching to persecution; and the piety which never obtrudes itself on spectators, and which operates no change whatever on the customs and manners of its professors, may be allowed to pass along with perfect security. But what shall we say of the contempt and ridicule with which vital godliness is so frequently met, both in the higher and in the inferior walks of life? And what shall we say of the bitterness of that zeal which, in the bosom of a worldly-minded family, is strenuously directed against the humble and modest but ardent piety of one or more of its members, who, by the grace of God, may have begun to manifest "another spirit?" And what shall we say of the frigid indifference or the determined hostility with which any direct allusion to the God who made us, or the Saviour who redeemed us by his blood, is met in the senate house of our country, or in the high places of the land? And what shall we say of the spirit of reckless animosity with which the public journals and the daily vehicles of intelligence are in the habit of assailing those worthy men, who stand up boldly for the purity of the Sabbath and the freedom of the slave? Is there no persecution here? nothing of the nature of a "cross" which the generous mind must bear? no practical demonstration of the fact that real godliness and strict morality are still the objects of scorn and ridicule to the men of this present world? The world knows and "loves *its own*;" and the religion which is pleased with things *as they are*, and which ventures not beyond the magic circle of this world's occupations, and pleasures, and interests, will run no very imminent risk of incurring the "world's dread laugh." Such a religion may suit the meridian of Dr Maltby, and his accommodating followers; but such a religion will do little to make head against the growing vices of the age. It may be "peaceable," but it is not "pure."

In such books as those of professor Halyburton we meet with much of that which has been denominated, not unaptly, *experimental religion*. Enlightened and judicious Christians whose views have not been perverted by modern philosophy, and who have not yet forsaken the "old land-marks" nor the "old paths," know very well what is designated by the terms. Experimental religion they consider as the only true practical religion—well grounded in principle, and sturdy in its opposition to all that is unholy; and they are inclined to look upon whatever falls short of it in the light of frivolous speculation or concealed infidelity. There are others, however, and these, there is too good reason to believe, by far the majority amongst us, who confound experimental religion with fanaticism and mental delu-

sion. Hence, we need not be surprised at finding it made the butt of an unsparing and relentless ridicule. Those who venture to defend it, as well as those who are considered as its hapless subjects or victims, are held up to public scorn, either as designing hypocrites, or as beings removed by a very few degrees from the region of the fatuous. But as "ridicule is not" always "the test of truth," and as the Almighty has been pleased to give us a perfect standard by which every opinion as well as every habit and practice may be tried, let us endeavour to ascertain what may be the claims of this phenomenon called experimental religion, to be held up to the cruelty and scorn of the "*rationalist*."

I. We would enquire, then, in the outset—What may be meant by experimental religion? Is it not frequently misunderstood? Are not the terms often grievously misapplied? And is it not of vast moment in every such inquiry, to attempt at least a careful separation between the chaff and the wheat?

As there is no subject either in religion or in morals, on which erroneous ideas have not been held under the guise of truth, we need not be surprised if such ideas have been at different periods entertained with respect to the nature of experimental religion. Some there are who suppose it to consist in a certain supernatural intercourse with Deity; the perception at the moment of a celestial influx of grace into the soul; sensible illapses of the spirit; and spiritual exercises of soul, altogether inconsistent with the ordinary rules which regulate the government of heaven. Others suppose it to consist in certain agitations of the animal frame, hastily mistaken for the touches of seraphic influence; in the changes which take place in the state of the feelings and passions, occasioned, it is supposed, by causes approaching to the miraculous; and in the observation of common occurrences, mistaken for extraordinary interpositions of Providence. Again, the terms have been applied to designate the feelings and habits which may have been acquired by profound speculations on matters which lie far beyond the range of the human intellect; and a peculiar species of sensations of which no one except the actual participant can form any idea. While such false conceptions as these are entertained on this subject, need we wonder that it should be made the butt of ridicule; and that the elevated experiences of enlightened Christian believers should be thus exposed to the imminent danger of ranking with the flights of Madame Guyon, and the dreams of Emanuel Swedenborg?

But what *is really* experimental religion? It is neither more nor less than the practical application of the *great truths* of religion to the particular *cases of individuals*. It is, in other words, the practical efficacy of Christian doctrine exemplified in the heart and on the life. It is Christianity brought home to "men's business and bosoms." For example,

religion calls on us to acknowledge, as founded on plain matter of fact, the doctrine of human depravity in general: it becomes experimental religion, when this doctrine is felt to be true, from our own personal experience. We may believe that there is salvation only through the merits of the Redeemer; and we may rejoice in the assurance that all who come unto God through him shall obtain everlasting life: we believe it *experimentally*, when we are individually humbled under a heartfelt sense of our utter inability to save ourselves; and when our own convictions of the absolute nothingness of our own resources respond to the dictates of God's infallible word. Christ hath promised the aid of his grace to renew, to sanctify, to comfort, and to guide; it is the province of experimental religion to cherish the sense of our need of grace, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and to be earnest and persevering in prayer for the influences of the Holy Spirit. We descant on the infinite value of Christianity as a source of pure and satisfying spiritual comfort; experimental religion consists in the personal enjoyment of this spiritual comfort. The Scriptures describe the Christian life as a "race" in which we must run so as to obtain; as a "fight," in which we must strenuously contend against spiritual enemies; in short, as a course of unceasing moral and spiritual exertion: sincerely and perseveringly to "run the race set before us;" to enter on the spiritual combat and to continue in it; to discharge the duties of personal and relative obligation in the spirit of humble dependence on God, and ardent attachment to his service;—this is experimental religion. To speculate on religion as a system of sublime truths, and as a powerful means of intellectual and spiritual improvement, is to know it as a science: we reduce it to experiment, only when we bring it into contact with our habitual conceptions of things, and when we adopt it as the supreme guide of ordinary conduct. In one word; the principle on which experimental religion rests, is simply this, that Christianity should not only be known, and understood, and believed, but also felt, and enjoyed, and practically applied.

II. There is nothing in experimental religion, as thus viewed, which is at variance with the unbiassed dictates of right reason. If the doctrines and principles of Christianity be reasonable in themselves, their application to the great and salutary purposes of real life cannot surely be unreasonable. If human nature be really depraved, is it irrational to feel and to lament, that we, individually, and as forming part of the common corrupted mass, are indeed partakers of the common depravity, and that therefore we ought, in the language of the prophet, to "mourn, each family apart, and each soul apart?" If religious truth be indeed a source of consolation; is it unreasonable to expect, and actually to realize this consolation? If Christ permits and cordially invites us to hope in the mercy of his Father, through the atonement and gracious intercession of himself, as our great High Priest; is

it unreasonable that we should "rejoice" in this hope; and that under its influence we should seek to "purify ourselves, even as he is pure?" If the life of the Christian be indeed a race—a pilgrimage journey through the wilderness of this world,—a moral campaign from which death only can release us—where is the absurdity of supposing that Christians may occasionally faint on their journey, or be wounded by their spiritual enemies; and that, in consequence of these casualties, much of what is known by the name of *Christian experience* should be acquired and treasured up for future and efficient service? The principles of a science are generally supposed to acquire additional evidence and illustration, from their being able to stand the test of rigid and repeated experiment; why should religion be the only science in which experiment shall be exploded? Can it be on any ground irrational and unphilosophical to seek for proofs of the truth, and excellence, and suitableness of Christian doctrine, from the actual experience of men, and from its well authenticated results on human character and life? The irrationality is all on the other side. The opponents of experimental religion do not avowedly explode the claims of religious truth to a cool and successful vindication; they rather boast of their having taken it out of the hands of unskillful defenders. But then they defend its claims simply as truth, and they estimate its merits by a standard exclusively intellectual. They maintain the importance of religion; but it is religion in the abstract sense; religion considered as a matter of scientific discussion; religion, as held to be too ethereal in its essence, and too recondite in its speculative researches, to be trusted for common and every day usage, in the hands of such creatures as the mass of mankind are found to be. They occasionally, and when the humour serves, introduce us into a paradise of delicious products; but when we venture to put forth our hands to grasp the fascinating sweets, a voice of stern prohibition is heard—"touch not, taste not, handle not!" Can any thing be more unreasonable than thus to acknowledge and to applaud the general truths of religion, but to reject their practical efficiency and their personal application? to defend religion as a science, but to deny to it all intercourse with the feelings, and the prospects, and the ordinary pursuits of men? On this principle, the shadow is indeed retained, but the substance is irretrievably gone. An altar is reared, and the sacrifice may be spread out upon its summit; but where is the sacred fire, and where the hallowed incense that ascends in silent majesty to heaven?

III. Is there any thing in experimental religion that is inconsistent with the holy, and gracious, and all-perfect *character of Jehovah*?

That Jehovah should reveal to his creatures, rational, immortal, and accountable, truths which possess a certain degree of moral efficacy; which are intended to operate powerfully on the feelings and the affections of

men ; to excite certain agreeable emotions ; and to produce certain valuable practical effects ;—is surely not inconsistent either with his natural or his moral attributes. Indeed, it would be far more difficult to vindicate the Divine character from the charge of inconsistency, on the supposition that truths had been revealed which possess no moral efficacy ; which address themselves exclusively to the intellect of men ; and which are designed to terminate in speculation. Truths of this abstract and refined character adapt themselves full well to beings endowed with intelligence alone, but they will not suit the nature of such a complex being as man. Where, on this supposition, would be the argument in favour of Christianity from its admirable adaptation to man's original constitution, and to the place which he holds in the universe of God ?

But it may be supposed not so easy to reconcile with our best conceptions of the Divine character, that acknowledged principle in experimental religion, which implies a certain kind of spiritual intercourse between God and the soul of the believer. The advocates of experimental religion do maintain, that God communicates his grace to men ; that he inspires them with the enraptured feeling of spiritual consolation ; that he condescends to hold fellowship with them in the holy exercises of sanctified affection ; that believers are constantly under the gracious superintendance of Jehovah ; and are, by the discipline of his providence and grace, gradually attuned to the temper and the bliss of heaven. If any objection can be made to this view of the case, the force of the objection bears not against experimental religion in particular, but against the doctrine of divine influence in general. If, in the world of nature, a present Deity is “ ever seen and ever felt,” in conducting, by a mysterious but real efficiency, the hidden processes of vegetable and animal life, shall we deem it the part of reason and of wisdom to place the moral and the spiritual worlds beyond the range of an influence similar in power, but wisely adapted to the very different subjects on which it is found to operate ? And if we allow that a certain spiritual influence is exerted by God on the minds of men, through the medium of religious truth addressed to the understanding and the heart, shall we hesitate to allow that this influence is exerted for the purpose of implanting and cherishing holy principles, of animating virtuous feelings, and of inspiring spiritual joy ? It must be granted that the doctrine of divine influence in general, and this specific modification of it, do alike imply the doctrine of a special Providence. But is there any thing inconsistent with the moral character of God in the supposition, that, while he exercises a general and a particular Providence over the world, he should exercise a special Providence towards the church which he hath chosen as his “ resting place ?” that while he confers temporal blessings on all men indiscriminately, in the course of his holy and gracious Providence, he should

confer spiritual blessings of a peculiar kind on his own people in particular? that while he holds a condescending intercourse with all creatures in the way of preservation and protection, he should hold with good men and with the denizens of immortality, an intercourse of a nobler and more heavenly character, for the purpose of preserving alive the spark of spiritual life, of administering consolation, and defending from invisible foes? It is of importance to remark, that prior to, and independent of, revelation and experience, it is quite beyond our power to tell what it may or may not be consistent with the Divine character to do, in regard to these modes of communication with our world and its inhabitants. We may traverse the wide fields of the intellectual world, but we shall not find one decisive argument to prove it inconsistent with the attributes of God, that he should hold special intercourse with good men, through the medium of the truths and ordinances of religion. The subject is confessedly one that lies far beyond our reach. All our information regarding it arises from the written word; and if the voice of nature, even among the blinded heathen, is for one moment to be listened to for a response, that response will be in perfect unison with the dictates of inspiration: for, by the teachers of virtue among the ancients, all real excellence of character was ascribed to the influence of Deity, and the virtues which were inscribed on characters of ideal greatness were linked with the dignities and the bliss of a celestial fellowship.

I should question much the title of that system of theology to be reckoned either philosophically just, or practically influential, which would go to destroy that beautiful analogy which obtains between the doctrine of Divine influence, and the constitution and course of nature. God hath constructed the grand machine of the material universe; hath arranged in beautiful harmony its varied parts; and hath subjected the whole to the control of certain laws; but God hath not seen meet to withdraw himself from the works of his hands, or to resign the beautiful machine of things to a general and undefined legislative control. *Our* God is not like the deity of Epicurus, or the Brahma of Hindooism; removed at an awful distance from the productions of his own hand, and dwelling in a state of absolute quiescence and sublime indifference to all that is. “Our God is in the heavens; and he doeth what pleaseth him in the heavens, and in the earth, and in all deep places.” All is under his control. The revolutions of the seasons, and the rise and fall of empires, are alike the subjects of his regard; and without him “not even a sparrow can fall to the ground.” Analogy leads us to expect the same presence and the same agency in the operations of the spiritual kingdom; and this analogy, the scheme which excludes Divine influence on the soul of man, tends directly to interrupt and to destroy. It deprives man of the noblest of all motives to sacred diligence in duty,

that, namely, which an apostle derives from God's ability and willingness to "work in us both to will and to do." It restrains us within the limits of a region comparatively cold and uninviting. It places an impassable barrier in the way of our access to that "temple of the living God" on earth, whose mansions are blest with the residence of the "eternal Spirit," and whose worshippers are gladdened with his hallowed inspirations.

IV. There is nothing in experimental religion that is inconsistent with plain and real facts as illustrative of the moral government of God in other instances.

Every pursuit, mental or moral, has a particular tendency. Every truth which the mind perceives, every event which happens in the course of Providence, has some influence, in a greater or in a less degree beneficial or hurtful. Is this analogy disturbed by supposing, that the truths of religion, the facts which Christianity records, and the holy views which it presents, should also possess and exercise a potent influence over the mind? The experience of all those who have been accustomed to intellectual and moral pursuits, bears witness to the same truth; and supports, by analogy, the reasonableness of experimental religion. In searching for truth, the philosopher enjoys a high mental satisfaction. Every new discovery gives delight to his mind; and the difficulties with which he is called to struggle, only quicken his ardour in pursuit. Who can tell the delight which the astronomer feels in counting the heavenly bodies, calculating their distances, exploring the orbits in which they move, and pointing out the laws by which they are regulated? What rapture, approaching to enthusiasm, on the discovery of a new star; on the observation of a comet in its first approach to our globe; or even on a fortunate conjecture respecting the matter of which its shining train is composed? What emotions, think you, fill the soul of a mathematician, while occupied in solving a difficult problem, or in constructing a beautiful proposition? The feelings of all these men, if disclosed, would appear altogether ridiculous to those who cannot enter into them. Shall we then confine all mental and moral pleasures, all high wrought pulsations of soul, all enthusiastic ardour, (if enthusiasm must needs be supposed,) to the breasts of the speculative few? Is there no portion to be dealt out to the humble Christian in the retired walks of life, whose secular views, perhaps, rise not above the village where his first breath was drawn, but whose spiritual prospects expand with the immensity of the universe? Shall Archimedes, when he had accidentally discovered the method of calculating the quantity of alloy in a golden crown, be permitted with impunity, and without any question as to his understanding, to run through the streets of Syracuse, exclaiming, in all the wantonness of philosophic joy, *εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα*, "I have found it! I have found it!"—And shall the Christian be branded with the

insignia of enthusiasm and madness, because he speaks of a "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory;" because, for a season, he seems to be overpowered with the sublime raptures of a pure and an elevated devotion; and because he lays claim to a happiness with which a "stranger intermeddeth not." To change the scene. If there be particular occasions on which even the lover of science is filled with melancholy forebodings, when he beholds the clouds of ignorance and of error which encircle or surcharge the intellectual horizon; need we wonder, if, in the Christian life, there should be seasons when, amid the perplexing influences of an evil heart within, and the "abounding of iniquity" without, good men may walk in sadness, and go mourning without the sun? The truth is, those only oppose and ridicule experimental religion, who have no spiritual discernment, no spiritual taste, no spiritual desires. "The way of peace is *above* to the righteous." "The life of a believer is hid with Christ in God." "The world *knoweth not* the sons of God, because it knew not *him*," who is emphatically and in a distinctive and peculiar sense—"God's *own* son."

V. The reality of experimental religion is attested beyond all question, by the testimony and example of the greatest and best of men in all ages. Look to the character of the saints of God as exhibited in the unerring page of God's own word. Were they strangers to experimental religion? Did they rest satisfied with cold and barren abstractions? Were they kept at an awful distance from the region of *feeling*, because they trembled at the charge of enthusiasm, or were afraid of being "righteous overmuch?" What a variety of emotions agitated the soul of David! What elevation of spirit at one time, and depression at another! What hallowed delight in communion with God! What earnest desires after loftier spiritual attainments! "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Ammonites, and from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me; and my prayer unto the God of my life." "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles: then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!" "O

God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee ; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” “ My soul breaketh for the longing it hath for thy commandments at all times.”—Is there nothing of the language and the feeling of experience in all this ? and do the writers of the New Testament adopt a different strain ? Read the history and the writings of the apostle Paul. Through these channels enter his breast, and contemplate the features of spiritual religion, as exemplified in him. Did *he* know nothing experimentally of the “ peace which passeth all understanding,” and the “ joy which is unspeakable and full of glory ?” Did *he* remain in the posture of a stoic, and the victim of all the apathy and deadness of “ simple intellect,” when he contemplated the “ height and the depth, the breadth and the length,” of the love of the Redeemer, “ which passeth all knowledge ?” And did the “ great mystery of godliness,” “ God manifest in the flesh,” excite no higher emotion in his soul than the examination of a problem in mathematics, or a theory of pure abstraction ? We have only to read his Epistles, and those of his fellow-apostles Peter and John, to mark the striking contrast betwixt their holy illustrations of divine truth, and the cold speculations and barren generalities of some modern theologians. Moreover, we might search the history of the church, and bring forward from its closely-studded pages a “ great cloud of witnesses” to the reality and importance of experimental religion. Men of talents very various, and of sentiments on lesser matters not less various, and men of very different temperament in regard to animal constitution, combine in asserting, that religion is an *internal* thing ; that it is a matter of personal experience ; that it is alike removed from the ravings of the visionary on the one hand, and the frigid speculations of the mere moralist on the other. We appeal to the Fathers of the Protestant churches, and we ask, if there was nothing experimental in that system of faith, of hope, and of holiness, which enabled them to brave death in its most awful forms, and to sing even in the midst of flames ? We appeal to the Christian world, as it is even in these degenerate days, and we ask the really religious of every country and of every clime, if there be nothing experimental in that religion which enables its votaries to stand erect in the flood of tribulation, and to smile even in the vale of death ? We appeal to the church-triumphant in heaven, and we ask, if there is nothing experimental in those feelings which express themselves in such ascriptions as these : “ Worthy the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever ?”

That experimental religion is not at all inconsistent with the possession and the display of intellect, in its highest advances, may be inferred from

the plain matter of fact, that the same man whose "Memoirs" have so frequently been charged with the rankest enthusiasm, was the author of a most learned and comprehensive reply to the deistical scheme of the celebrated Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Mr Halyburton's book on the "Insufficiency of Natural Religion, and the Necessity of Revelation," was occasioned by the publication of certain Treatises, written by that sceptical nobleman with the avowed object of setting aside the pretensions of all "particular religions," as he termed them; and, resting the claims of *religion at large* on the basis of nature alone. His Lordship reduced all the essential articles of religion to five; the unity of God, the reasonableness of divine worship, the obligations of piety and virtue, the sufficiency of repentance for pardon, and a state of rewards and punishments after death. He attempted to show, that these doctrines had been recognized in every age and in every country as the common faith of mankind, and that any thing beyond the circle which bounds them is unnecessary, and even pernicious. It will be obvious to the most careless observer, that the above catalogue comprehends, with a single exception, the whole faith of the Socinian; and it is edifying just to notice the very near approximation which the faith of the deist and of the followers of the *fratres Poloni* make to each other. The single exception we allude to is the article relative to the divine mission of Christ; and this, upon the principles of the rationalist, becomes a matter of very trivial importance the moment that the disciple of Lord Herbert conscientiously declares, that he has already acquired all that is essential to the system of *both parties*, from separate and independent sources; even from that light which comes directly to us from heaven, and which shines not through the contracted medium of any one "particular" religion.

In his reply to the scheme of Lord Herbert, Mr Halyburton sets himself largely and distinctly to show, that the light of nature is extremely defective, even with respect to the discoveries of a Deity, and the worship that is to be rendered to him: with respect to the question of man's true happiness, the rule of duty, and the motives to obedience; and that it is unable to discover the means of obtaining pardon for sin, or to eradicate inclinations to sin, and subdue its power. He appeals to reason, to testimony, to matter of fact, and to the general experience of the world. He afterwards considers distinctly the articles to which Lord Herbert reduces his Catholic religion, and explodes the evidence which he advances in favour of their universality. He takes up the arguments of Mr Blount and Mr Gildon on the same subject, and gives to them in succession a fair and solid refutation.

It was in France and Italy that the new scheme of Deism, as it was then called, for the first time reared its head, about the beginning of the seventeenth century. The men who patronized it were, generally speaking,

distinguished for learning, ingenuity, and sparkling wit. They wrote after the model of the new philosophers, who scorned that philosophical slavery which former ages had been under to Aristotle. Their appeal was to reason; and it is not to be wondered at, that their plain and plausible statements and arguments should have produced on thinking minds a powerfully-favourable impression, in countries where the dominant system was one of priestcraft, superstition, and folly. Nearly about the same time, some novel opinions began to be entertained and published in Holland, a country which has ever been considered as pretty safely removed from the region of religious Quixotism and romance. These novelties were rapidly thrown into a form very near akin to Socinianism, "which," says Mr Halyburton, "is but a remove from Deism." It was not long before these new opinions took footing in England, and, to use the language of the professor, "they began to be embraced and countenanced by some topping churchmen; who, forgetful of their own articles, homilies, and subscriptions, carefully maintained and zealously propagated this new divinity." It appears that at the period in question, the Jesuits of Rome were suspected of having had a deep concern in disseminating those opinions. Rushworth, in his "Collections," repeatedly notices the boasting of the Jesuits, "that they had planted such a drug in England as would soon purge out the northern heresy."* "Once make men Atheists," it has been shrewdly and solidly remarked, "and it will be easy to turn them into Papists." Those who observe what is passing around us in the present day, will not fail to notice a striking parallel with the above case in our own experience. The unnatural and monstrous alliance betwixt infidelity and Romanism; betwixt the men who plead for the most extravagant licentiousness of opinion, on the one hand, and the men who would subjugate every mind and every sentiment to the Procrustes' sway of the Vatican, on the other; is one of the most ominous peculiarities of the present times. The phenomenon as it appears *now* may be explained on the same principle which the Jesuit avowed two centuries ago. Any thing that will crush the "northern heresy" of Protestantism, or sap its foundations, must be acceptable to that church which has never been wanting in its practical application of the principle, that "the end sanctifies the means."

Dr Leland, in noticing the work of Mr Halyburton, whom he properly terms "a learned and pious author," remarks, that "the narrowness of his notions on some points hath prejudiced some persons against his work, and hindered them from regarding and considering it so much as it deserves." The author of that invaluable work, the "View of Deistical Writers," was, like our author, "a learned and pious divine;" but, while

* Vol i. p. 475, and Letter by a Jesuit, p. 62, ib.

the "learning" of the two was alike profound and extensive, the "piety" of the one was of a different cast, and nurtured in a different school, from that of the other. The "piety" of Halyburton was that of a heart deeply exercised, and of a conscience ever tenderly alive to the sensibilities of spiritual feeling. Leland was a man of powerful and commanding intellect, and the bulwarks of Zion may well boast of having such a defender; but his feelings were not deeply interested in the cause which he so ably maintained, and his practical contexture and habits wanted exceedingly the seasoning of an evangelical spirit. It need not surprise us, then, to find, that, in the estimate of a liberal Protestant, Halyburton should have been considered as a man of rather "narrow notions." He flourished at a time when his country had been, for a succession of years, tutored in the school of libertinism and Popery combined, and when his much-loved church had learned, from sad experience, what her children might expect from the sad union of a low standard of doctrine with the high and persecuting claims of a dominant hierarchy. He appreciated aright the vast importance of a strict and unbending adherence to the grand peculiarities of "the faith once delivered unto the saints;" while he practically denounced, as anti-christian, the modish speculations of "philosophical Christians." He justly attached far more importance than Dr Leland would have done to the points at issue betwixt the Episcopalians and Presbyterians of the period, though no man was more ready to do honour to the conscientious and consistent adherent of any form of ecclesiastical sway. He had not learned as yet that Episcopacy had any peculiar claims on Scotland and on Scotsmen for the *choice blessings* she had conferred; nor had he learned, that "Presbyterianism was a religion unfit for a gentleman." That style of preaching, then so much in vogue in England, which substituted heathen morality in place of the gospel of Christ, had no charms for him; and if this learned defender of the faith was really a man of "narrow notions," it must, at any rate, be allowed to him, that he wanted not capacity to "give a reason" for adopting and maintaining them. "After men," says he, "once were taught that the controverted doctrines of religion were not necessary to salvation, and that all that was necessary thereto, was to be referred to, and comprehended under, morality, and that there was no need of regeneration, or the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of Christ, in order to the performance of our duty; it is easy to see how slight the difference was to be accounted between a Christian and an honest moral heathen. And if any small temptation offered, how natural was it for men to judge, that the hazard was not great to step over from Christianity to Deism, which is Paganism *à la mode!*"

The learned and pious clergymen of the church of Scotland, whose testimonials in favour of Mr Halyburton's work are so creditable to them-

selves and to him, were not men of “narrow notions,” and yet they were not the patrons of a cold and generalized theology. After stating their high sense of the importance and necessity of the work, they thus express themselves:—“We, therefore, wishing and hoping that these posthumous labours of the reverend author may, through the blessing of God, prove useful and profitable for promoting and confirming the serious and unbiassed reader in the true Christian faith, do earnestly recommend to him the diligent perusal of them, and him, in using of them, to the grace of God for that effect.” Here the grace of God is recognised as specially necessary to produce a conviction of the truth, and the design of the study of the evidences of Christianity is clearly recognised as of a practical and experimental character. The men who thus recommend the work were among the truest and best of the members of the church of Scotland in the beginning of last century; and no man whose opinion is worth a straw will feel himself disgraced by standing on the same platform with the three principals, Carstairs, Wisheart, and Haddow, or with professor Hamilton of Edinburgh. A late eminent minister among the Dissenters in England, Dr Edward Williams, in his “Christian Preacher,” has concurred with these able men in attesting the work as one “of great solidity and worth.”

The late excellent Mr Newton of London, in writing to Mr Scott, the distinguished author of the Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, and the “Force of Truth,” thus expresses himself in regard to the work on Natural and Revealed Religion, and generally with respect to the other writings of the same author. “I set a high value,” says he, “on this book of Halyburton’s, so that, unless I could replace it with another, I know not if I would part with it for its weight in gold. The first and largest treatise is, in my judgment, a masterpiece; but I would chiefly wish you to peruse the essay “Concerning Faith,” towards the close of the book. I need not beg of you to read it carefully, and to read it all. The importance of the subject, its immediate connexion with your inquiries, and the accuracy of the reasoning, will render my request unnecessary. I cannot style him a very elegant writer; and, being a Scotsman, he abounds in the Scottish idiom. But you will prefer truth to ornament. I long to hear your opinion of it. It seems to me so adapted to some things that have passed between us, as if written on purpose.”* The same excellent author, in writing to another friend, the Rev. Mr R——, regarding the Supralapsarian and the Sublapsarian schemes, thus remarks: “At the close of Halyburton’s “Insufficiency of Natural Religion,” he has an inquiry into the nature of Regeneration and Justification, wherein he proposes a scheme in which, if I mistake not, the moderate of both parties might safely unite.”† The late Dr Thomas Gibbons of London,

* Cardiphonia, Vol. I. Letter II. to Mr Scott.

† Ibid. Vol. II.

author of the “Memoirs of Eminently Pious Women,” and other useful works, has recorded his opinion of our author, in a few lines, not remarkable, indeed, for their harmonious versification, but containing an important statement of fact :

“Sheath’d in celestial armour, and lifting high
The sword, invincible, of truth divine,
See HALYBURTON on the mounds, the camp
Of Deism rush, and triumph o’er its powers!”‡

But there are men—of learning and piety too—who limit not their approbation of Halyburton’s works to the learning and the talent which his work against the Deists displays. Mr Bridges, in his most excellent work on the “Christian Ministry,” refers to the “Memoirs” of Halyburton, as giving the most graphical delineations of the diversified desires of the mind in conviction of sin ; and Mr Jones, in his “Christian Biography,” has said of Mr Halyburton, that “his last words are among the richest treasures which piety ever bequeathed to the church ; and the letters which he dictated on his dying bed, are specimens of his unparalleled devotion and concern for the welfare of others.” Dr Isaac Watts—no mean man, certainly—has written prefaces to most of Mr Halyburton’s works, and he thus expresses his sentiments regarding him : “Besides his solid learning, his clear and penetrating judgment, his acute reasoning, his eminent piety, and other excellent endowments, there was one thing I could not but highly value in his converse, that, according to the apostle’s advice, Eph. iv. 29, what ‘proceeded out of his mouth was good, to the use of edifying, which might minister grace to the hearers :’ so that I may truly say, I was seldom in his company, but it was mine own fault if I was not edified.” “The author and subject of this narrative,” says he, speaking of his Memoirs, “was a man of great piety, bright natural parts, studious learning, and uncommon penetration and judgment, as sufficiently appears in his other writings ; yet there is such a vein of humility and honesty, that runs through every page, that you may see the secret workings of his thoughts through his holy language.” “Here we find reason and learning giving their testimony to the gospel, and to the power of godliness, with a living pen and with dying lips.” Of the Memoirs it has been justly said, “that scarcely is there a position which was ever taken up by the enmity of man against the mercy of his Maker, but was occupied by him, and resolutely maintained, till it was driven from under him ; and scarcely, we should

‡ “The Christian Minister,” a poem, by Gibbons.

think, can a 'refuge of lies' be entered by those who came after him, but was previously entered by him, and made his resting place, till he found it to be no shelter. In short, the history of his advance towards Christianity, solely in its direction, so full of incident, and so frequently obstructed by relapses, with the repose which he tasted on his arrival at it, and the growth of character in his after-years, all opening upon us so graphically, so richly interwoven with scriptural references, and coming in so aptly on our past or present experience, is a treasury of instruction which ought by no means to be shut up from the present generation."*

It is not an unpromising symptom of the theological taste of the present age, that the writings of such men as Owen, and Baxter, and Howe, and Halyburton, and Edwards, are rising in demand. These are the masters in our Israel. They wield the sword of the Spirit with masculine skill; and just in proportion as we tread in their footsteps, and plead the same cause with them, may we expect the blessing of heaven to shine upon our efforts. It is *not* necessary that we imitate them in their peculiarities of a style and phraseology which belong to an age that is gone by; but *it is* necessary that we imitate them in adherence to those eternal truths, which no age can antiquate, and which no revolutions in the church can change. Amid the diversities of opinion, truth remains the same; and a church which is built on the "foundation of apostles and prophets," with Jesus Christ as its "chief corner-stone," has the pledge of heaven in its favour. If it falls, it must be because "Ichabod" has been previously inscribed on its ruined battlements. If its standards and its discipline are doomed to rank among the things which *have been*, it will be because the "spirit of the fathers" has not "turned to the children." If our heavens shall become as brass, and our earth hard as iron, it is because we have grieved the Holy Spirit; "and therefore he hath turned to be our enemy, and fought against us."

Mr Halyburton flourished at a period when the church of Scotland had just emerged from the darkness of that gloomy night of persecution which had settled around her for the long space of nearly thirty years. He was not properly one of the Covenanters; but he had drunk deeply into their spirit—a spirit of uncompromising adherence to the cause of truth, and unflinching fidelity to the league of the faithful. His parents had shared of the cup of suffering. His earliest and strongest attachments were formed in the school of adversity; and he entered on the service of the church with all the ardour of a mind tutored by experience. The labours in which he engaged as a pastoral superintendent of one of the parishes of his native district, together with his known learning, his commanding talents, and his decided piety, recommended him as a fit person to be the instructor

* Yoang's Essay, introductory to Halyburton's Memoirs, p. 39.

of the “sons of the prophets,” in one of the seminaries of the Scottish Israel; and he began his career in the theological chair at St Andrews, under the most promising auspices. It pleased the great Head of the church to spare him only a short time to edify the church in that important station. In the lapse of two years, he was called from the labours and anxieties of the church-militant on earth, to the rest and the glories of the church-triumphant in heaven. His life, though short, spoke volumes; and his death-bed scene addressed survivors in language more solemn, and with an energy more pungent, than the living voice could command.

R. B.

PAISLEY, Oct. 17, 1832.

RECOMMENDATION.

THE author of these discourses has discovered to the world, a bright genius, strong reason, and solid learning, in the treatise which he has published against the Deists, wherein he has carried the war into their quarters, has beat the infidels at their own weapons, and triumphs over them in their own camp.

The Memoirs of his Life, and the Secret Transactions between God and his Soul, copied from his private papers, sufficiently manifest his acquaintance with the inward and vital part of religion, and his deep insight into the affairs of sin and grace.

Now, where such natural ingenuity, and such learned endowments, are sanctified by such a variety of rich experiences, and attended with such a train of Christian graces, what a glorious composition must all these make! And how well furnished must such a man be for the service of God, and for the salvation of men!

The title-page gives you a short, but true account, of the substance of this book; and the preface informs you in what manner the author has pursued and handled those solemn and most important subjects. I have perused a great part of this treatise, and I can boldly say, that the preface gives an honourable, but a just account of the performance, and leaves very little for me to add by way of recommendation; and this also can be only necessary to those who have had no opportunity of acquaintance with the author, or his works.

I would first take notice of this character of it, that it is written much in the strain of some of the best of our English sermons in the last age, when the pulpits did not affect politeness and indolence, but spoke thunder to the secure conscience, and made the hearers feel the terrors of the Lord; when the preachers applied the grace of the gospel to souls that were wounded by the law, in a more skilful and successful manner than has been generally practised in later years. This treatise seems to be written in the power and spirit of that day, when stupid souls were convinced in multitudes, and sinners were led by troops into the paths of salvation, by faith in the Son of God; when conversions were numerous, and the power of godliness was almost as common as the stricter forms of it are now-a-days.

In the work of convincing secure sinners, young and old, the author has suited his addresses to every character of mankind, and hath shown himself a workman that need not to be ashamed. There may happen now and then a single thought or expression, that may be conceived too strongly, or pushed too far, under the warm influence of his zeal. But let it be remembered, that these were his popular discourses, prepared weekly

RECOMMENDATION.

for the use of his parish, unlaboured, unpolished, and undesigned for the view of the public; yet, such as they are, they contain more useful thoughts for the real benefit of souls, than any of the polite and well fashioned discourses that obtain too much of modern applause.

In this handling the doctrine of faith in Christ, his sentiments are very conformable to those of the pious and venerable Dr John Owen: his own Christian experiences seem to have been in some part moulded and formed by the practical and spiritual writings of that great man; who, in the matters of experimental godliness, was, in my esteem, one of the prime writers of the last age, if not superior to them all. Nor does my veneration of him arise from the honour that Divine Providence has done me, in appointing me his successor, in the pastoral office to the same church of Christ; but from the sensible benefit which I have often received from his writings, and that before I was ever acquainted with the people to whom he ministered. And wherever I see the breathings of the same spirit, they secretly influence me to favour such a writer, and refresh my early reverence for that great man. I confess his style was long and intricate; and herein this author has the advantage of him, whose language is plain and condescending, popular and easy! so that I dare venture to recommend this work to the perusal even of the meanest souls, who are willing to concern themselves in this world about their salvation in the next.

The Third Part of this treatise is very proper to awaken sleepy Christians to life, and vigour, and activity, as well as to direct the new convert how he may shape and square his conduct to the glory of saving grace, and to inform him what he should do for that God who has done so much for him. I hope it will be of use also to raise up the dying power of family religion, and set many a master of the household upon inquiry, what they have done to promote the power of godliness among those that are under their care.

I would take the freedom particularly to recommend this discourse to be distributed by Christians who have a tender concern for the souls of their children, or any other dear relatives or friends. If the work of grace be already begun upon their hearts, by the blessing of God, this may help to promote and advance it with power and glory; but if they are yet in ignorance and darkness, unawakened and thoughtless of their eternal concerns, I would more especially propose this book to be given them; and may it be attended with the divine influences of the Spirit, that the author, who is now dead, may yet speak in these sermons, to the salvation of many who are yet living! Amen.

I. WATTS.

LONDON,
Nov. 7. 1721. }

P R E F A C E.

WERE it not to answer the expectation of readers, and comply with the custom of writers, the following book might be ventured out to the world, without either preface, introduction, or recommendation, the very title-page containing enough to entitle it to a careful and candid reading and perusal.

The worth and credit of the author, is sufficiently established among such as have any taste of piety or learning.

By the history of his life, which has met with very good acceptance, it appears that he was a man of God, one whom he had set apart for himself. How distinct and pointed was he in observing the Lord's way and work, in bringing him to himself! And where can we see a brighter example, in those latter days of the world, of the humbling exercises and comfortable enjoyment of Christians, than in the author?

How exciting and edifying is it, to see how close he walked with God in his secret intercourse with him, in his domestic relations, and family devotions, in his public and ministerial work, and his conversation before the world, "setting the Lord always before him, and acknowledging him in all his ways!"

May we not then expect something very well worth our while, in the performance of one of such a character? One that had the contents of the book written upon his own heart, before he preached them to his people, and was a living and lively witness and example of the great and grave truths now exhibited to public view.

However little this part of his character may take with the multitude, yet those truly serious, who valued him while living, and have an honour for his memory when dead, will, no doubt, take pleasure to see how the great purposes in the book were managed by such an excellent hand; and the brethren that were concerned in the publishing of it, can, with a good deal of assurance, say, that the experience, upon perusing, will answer the expectations raised, of meeting with a spirit of seriousness and piety breathing in it, and a great deal of solid judgment and distinct thought; and, in some incident questions, not uncurious, there is sufficient evidence of his penetration, and what may be very agreeable and taking to them who set up for something above what is vulgar.

There is nothing in it mean, or unworthy of a grave, judicious, and learned author: if any thing look that way, it is where the necessity of the matter, and capacity of those he dealt with, required it, "becoming all things to all men;" particularly when dealing with children, it was fit to do it as near their own terms as possible: for to suit matter to the design we have, and to the conditions of those we deal with, is no argument of the want, but of the strength of judgment.

He was excellently fitted and enriched with talents, for every post Providence called him to, having filled and adorned the Doctor's chair

as Professor of Divinity, as well as the pulpit, while pastor to a Christian flock.

But though there had been less to say for the author, the contents of the book deserve a fair hearing, and a serious perusal; why? it is the **GREAT CONCERN**, it is not a trifle, it is not an amusement; no, it is of the last consequence to us, to know these things. Many live unconcerned, and love to do so; it may be, the very title shall be with such an argument against reading; there is little hope of fixing such so long as to read the book, or so deep as to do it seriously, and with due concern: and no wonder, when those, so indifferent about the great concerns of eternity and their precious souls, suffer the scripture oracles to lie by them, without due, frequent, and serious inquiry into them.

Here is presented to the view of Christians, and those who would indeed be such, what, by the blessing of God, may be very entertaining, edifying, and useful.

The first fruits of his labours, in the sermon next after his ordination, printed as an introduction to the book, shows how much his work was at heart, and under what concern he was, to prepare the people for entertaining and improving his ministry and message, and to approve himself to God, in the discharge and delivery thereof.

In the First Part, the state of nature is represented as a state of sin, misery, and wrath, in the most pungent, affecting, and convincing terms imaginable; where the guilty sinner is closely pursued into all the turns and stages of life, and convicted of sin: in each and all of them, sin is represented as odious and abominable, as exceeding sinful.

It is laid open in such glasses, and with such aggravations, as it is hard to avoid the conviction of it, but where natural hardness is increased, by the malignant influence of Satan, whose great design and strength lies in keeping all in peace.

The divine resentments against sin, wrath, and judgment, upon sinners, are likewise set forth in such a manner, as cannot easily miss to raise terror in the consciences of the guilty: present wrath in the direful effects of it, wrath to come in the extent and extremity of it, are held forth in such a lively manner, as must raise the gratitude of those happily delivered from it, and bids very fair to alarm and awaken those yet under it, to escape and flee for their lives.

Then, upon supposition of conviction of sin and guilt, in the Second Part, the exercises of the convinced sinner are opened up most distinctly and judiciously, in their nature, rise, workings and degrees, and in such a feeling manner as may easily persuade one, that he has, in this matter, copied over his own experience: and it is some degree of satisfaction to one in this condition, to have one going before them, and to think that their guide has trodden the same path.

With what tenderness and compassion doth he touch the cases of the distressed! while yet, with faithfulness and freedom, he opens up the mistakes and deceits, both in the workings and issue of convictions, approving himself an interpreter, one among a thousand. Those who by the Spirit are convinced of sin, will know how to put a value upon a piece so suitable to their case; and those awakened and convinced are led by a skilful hand, to the centre of rest for wearied souls, by the way of faith and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, which gives occasion for

opening up the mystery of faith in its nature, acts, and properties, concomitants, and consequences, which will be found very useful for informing the less knowing, confirming the weak, and comforting the strong believer.

And what can be of greater importance for us to know, than the only way of escaping wrath to come, and being delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law, of being united to Christ, and being found in him, upon which he becomes our righteousness and strength, whereby we are entitled to the great salvation?

Of which salvation the author treats as the great encouragement of believing; and this is the one thing necessary; for, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This salvation is set forth in Scripture-light, accounted for in its parts and properties, at a good length: and as this is of the last consequence to all, so it must be the delight of those that have it at heart.

If thou art convinced and awakened, and brought to a concern about salvation, if brought to the jailor's case, thou wilt welcome the help offered, and readily attend to the answer of the apostle to his question: for what can be more proper and pertinent to the case of such, than the true way to escape the misery of a natural state, and attain the felicity of a gracious one? These, as they will not spare, so they will not repent, the pains of reading these sheets.

Such as are by grace engaged to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are a people saved of the Lord, will have it at heart, what to do for God; they will set themselves, in the strength of grace, to all the duties of religion, whereby God may be glorified, and their faith justified, and their begun salvation promoted: all which good designs are answered in the Third Part of the book.

And this gives an account of personal religion, of the service of God, how we must enter into it, and persevere in it; and what more useful piece of knowledge is there, than how we may do service to, and keep up our communion with God? Here our first transactions and after-walk are pointedly and piously directed.

Here also family-religion is opened in its parts, the foundations of it fixed, and the practice of it enforced with powerful arguments, and suitable directions for people's walking in their house, and the proper duties of the several relatives in a family; which, if duly observed, would turn houses into churches; and that is very necessary when family-devotion is declining and like to wear out.

A public religion comes also under consideration in this Part, or a public spirit; whence the thing is recommended, and yet cautioned with great wisdom and judgment, to prevent people's going out of their sphere, and beyond their line.

The order, subordination, and mutual dependencies and relations of personal, domestic, and public religion, are nicely stated, and judiciously discovered, and proper caveats entered against beginning at the wrong end, as seldom missing to end either in apostasy or division; which cannot be but very useful in the present juncture, when divisions so much abound, and dividing inclinations are so much aloft.

In a word, there is no part of the book, but what is of high importance and great usefulness; which, joined with the established character

and reputation of the author, entitles it to a kind reception, and due perusal.

As these were the main prompters of the publishing the book, so they may be reckoned sufficient arguments for a careful reading and improvement of it, now when published.

It comes out with very little alteration, even as to words, as they stood in the manuscript, partly because it did not much need it, and partly out of veneration for the author, whose pulpit skill and style was so generally acceptable; yet it is not to be supposed, but if it had received a finishing stroke from his own hand, for the press, it might have appeared more beautiful; though even under this want, it will be found, that neither method nor style is disagreeable, though popular, and just as prepared and delivered to his people.

May all that have encouraged the design of publishing the book, meet with the double reward of edification to their own souls, and seeing it do much good to others. We live in a time when all helps and advantages need to be improved, for awakening secure sinners, and bringing them under soul-uptaking inquiries about salvation, and stirring up Christians to the universal practice of piety and godliness. And as the book has a plain tendency to these ends, go on and read it, and digest and apply it, begging that God may effectually bless and prosper it to those good ends for which it is designed.

INTRODUCTORY SERMON.

I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me ?—Acts x. 29.

WAVING the formality of an introduction, I shall lay before you a few remarks for clearing the occasion of the apostle's using this question, and the reason why we have made choice of this text at this time, for the subject of this discourse. And,

1. This chapter contains a large and particular account of one Cornelius, a Roman centurion, or captain of a hundred soldiers, his conversion to Christianity.

2. Cornelius, though by birth a Roman, was of the Jewish religion, a proselyte. Those who of other nations embraced the true religion, associating themselves to the Jews, were called proselytes; and they were either such as joined with the Jews in the whole rites of their religion, being circumcised as were the Jews; or such as adhered to the substantial of their religion, but remained uncircumcised. The former sort were called proselytes of righteousness, or of the covenant; the latter, proselytes of the gate. Interpreters seem to agree, that Cornelius was a proselyte of the gate, one who owned the substance of religion, but remained uncircumcised, and did not join in the whole of their worship.

3. This captain was a true convert before this discovery of the gospel came to him by the apostle: he was accepted of God, and therefore was not to be accounted unclean. Now, none save those who are converted can be accepted: for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God: and without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that comes to him must believe that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. Wherefore,

4. He, no doubt, leaned upon the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, for his acceptance with God; since "none can come to the Father but by him," who is "the way, the truth, and the life," and who only can guide sinners in their approaches to God.

5. God being a rewarder of such as diligently seek him, did reward this man's faith and obedience with the gospel-revelation of his Son Jesus Christ, whence he came to understand, that the Messiah he looked for was already come. His prayers and alms-deeds are said to come up for a memorial before God; not as if there had been any thing of merit in what was done or attained to, but to encourage others, and to discover the riches of God's bounty, in rewarding freely, according to his rich

grace, the diligent improvement of light with greater degrees of light and life; and this reward is not of debt, but of rich and sovereign grace.

6. This saint, waiting for the consolation of Israel, has a vision from God, bidding him send for the apostle Peter; whence we may learn, that God has a great respect for his own institutions. The gospel-ministry is of divine appointment; and therefore the Lord refers Cornelius to it, though it had been no less easy to have discovered Christ to him in the vision.

7. Peter had a vision to the same purpose, removing such objections as might make him scruple: whence we may remark, that when the Lord designs good to a people, by a minister, he gives both the people clearness to call and the minister clearness to come; though not in such an extraordinary manner as this here made use of.

8. When the apostle, in compliance with Cornelius's call, and God's call, or rather the Lord's joining in the same call with him, comes to the place where he was, the first question he puts to him is that which we have read to you; "I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" and this he doth, notwithstanding he had got some account of this from the servants who were sent for him by Cornelius.

The words are in themselves plain; and therefore we shall not offer any explication of them, but lay before you this doctrine, which is palpably contained in them.

Doctr.—"A faithful gospel-minister, coming among a people upon their call, will be very desirous to know what their designs for calling him were:" "I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?"

In discoursing this point, we shall inquire,

I. What designs a people should have in calling a gospel-minister.

II. What way they should evidence these to be their designs.

III. Make some inquiry into the reasons of the doctrine.

And, lastly, apply the whole.

I. To begin with the first of these. The designs a people should have in calling a gospel-minister; they are many. We shall endeavour to reduce them to a few. And,

1. A people should, in calling a gospel-minister, design to hear from him the whole counsel of God, in reference to their eternal salvation. This is the great business of gospel-ministers, to declare the whole counsel of God to those to whom they come, to keep nothing back from them that may be of use to them. So their commission runs, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all thing whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen." And the great apostle of the Gentiles, in that famous farewell sermon of his to the church of Ephesus, which we have recorded, Acts xx. from ver. 17 and downwards, appeals to the conscience of that people, as to his faithfulness in fulfilling his commission in declaring to them the whole counsel of God, ver. 27. And in keeping back nothing that could be profitable to them, ver. 20. Whoever would approve himself a faithful gospel-minister, must take care faithfully to discover to his hearers their lost and undone state by nature; that they are all become

guilty before God; and that there is no other way of their obtaining access to him but through Jesus Christ, who is made of God to them who believe, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." To these two doth the apostle refer the whole of that counsel of God, he shunned not to declare to the Ephesians, in that forecited scripture, Acts xx. 21. He testified to all persons, Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God (i. e. that they were guilty of such offences against God, as called for deep humiliation), and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ: that is, that there was no way of escaping the wrath of God, but that of closing with Christ by faith. This is the mater of the gospel: and Christ's servants are to make it their business faithfully to unfold the mind of God in reference to these two, man's state by nature, and what he may by grace be advanced to. This is called, 1 Tim. v. 7. a "labouring in the word and doctrine."

This preaching of the gospel takes in three things. 1. A full proposal of the doctrine just now mentioned. Ministers must, without mincing the matter, plainly discover to men their lost state, and the impossibility of recovery any other way than by the gospel method, through Jesus Christ, Acts xx. 21. 2. They must discover these things, not as their private sentiments, built upon some rational conclusions of their own drawing and framing, but as the word of God. It is the word of God they are to propose, and not their own private opinions; and it is the word of God hearers are to receive from them, 1 Thess. ii. 13. "For this cause also thank we God," saith the apostle, "without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 3. This preaching of the word takes in not only a proposal of the word of God, but an authoritative declaration of it by virtue of a commission derived from God. "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority," Tit. ii. 15. The word, in the first language, may be rendered *command*, with all command. Ministers are clothed with authority from God: and in his name, by virtue of a commission received from him, they are to preach the gospel, and to speak the counsel of God, as being his mouth to the people, 1 Pet. iv. 11. This is the principal part of the minister's work; and therefore to hear the word of God from them in this manner, should be the great design of those who call a gospel-minister, that they may hear from them as the mouth of God, what by nature they are, and what through the grace of God in Christ Jesus they may be. But now,

2. When a people call a gospel-minister, they should design the regular and orderly performance of the worship of God. This worship of God, as it is contradistinguished from the doctrine of the gospel, of which under the former head, consists principally in the administration of the sacraments and prayer; public prayer, I mean, under which praises are comprehended, as belonging to, and always to be joined with it, according to our blessed Lord's appointment in that form, commonly called the Lord's prayer, which concludes with thanksgiving. In Acts ii. 42. we have an account of the public worship of the church, which consists in preaching, there expressed by doctrine, and breaking of bread, that is, administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and

prayers and praises. "And they," saith the Spirit of God speaking of the church, "continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" and, ver. 47. "praising God." The celebration of the sacraments, public prayers and praises, are divine institutions for the salvation and edification of the church, which cannot be gone about, or orderly performed, without a gospel-ministry, who only have commission to celebrate the sacraments, and to be the mouth of the people to God in their public assemblies, being furnished with spiritual gifts for the work, Matt. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 23. and xiv. 16. And therefore, when a people call a gospel-minister, they should have this in view, as one great design, that thereby they may have the gospel-worship celebrated among them in all its parts, according to Christ's institution, to their spiritual advantage and his glory.

3. They should call a gospel-minister to rule over them. This is one part of the minister's work, to rule over his flock, 1 Tim. v. 17. "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." This superiority which gospel-ministers have, is not a lordly dominion over either the persons or faith of their flock. No, any thing of this sort that ever crept into the church, had its rise from the subtilty of Satan, who envied its peace; and is directly opposite to the gospel, which forbids lordly dominion, the gospel-minister's authority being given only for "edification, and not for destruction," as the apostle has it, 2 Cor. x. 8. And it consists, 1. In an authoritative publication of the laws of Christ's house. 2. In an authoritative enforcement of them, by a ministerial offer of the gospel-privileges as the rewards of obedience. And, 3. In a power to inflict, according to Christ's appointment, the gospel-punishments upon the disobedient, the highest whereof is excommunication, whereby the disobedient are "delivered over to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," as the apostle has it, 1 Cor. v. 5. And to one of these three ends might all be reduced, according to the common distinction of gospel-ordinances, in doctrine, worship, and government. But that you may the better understand this matter, we shall name some more particular designs: and therefore we say,

4. A people, in calling a gospel-minister, should design the closing of a bargain, and making a match with Christ upon his own terms. It is the work and business they are sent out for, to espouse sinners to Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 2. to woo a bride for the Lamb. They have a commission, as Abraham's servant had, to go and seek a wife for their Master's Son; and those who call them should do it in order to the conclusion of this happy match; that from them they may hear the terms whereon they are to be admitted into this near relation, the advantages that shall accrue to them by it, the inconveniences they will run themselves into by a refusal, and the warrant they have to enter into so high and honourable a relation.

5. They should design their own furtherance in acquaintance with Christ. They should, "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. that they may be furthered in their joy and faith, "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

6. They should design their own establishment in the ways of God, that they may not be "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," but that, "being rooted and grounded in the faith, they may grow up in all things to him who is the head and Saviour of the body."

This is expressly declared to be the design of the ministry, Eph. iv. 11. The apostle, having spoken of Christ's exaltation, and his having received gifts for men, tells us of him, in this verse and the following, "That he gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive," &c. And to the same purpose speaks the Spirit of God, frequently elsewhere, of the design of the ministry. Paul, Rom. i. 11. expresseth his earnest desire to see them, and to "impart some spiritual gift" unto them, to the end "they may be established." Those who are already engaged in God's ways should design their own establishment in them, in their calling a gospel-minister.

7. They should design their direction through all the difficulties of religion. The Lord's people have many dark steps in their way; sometimes they are under temptation, and know not how to carry; sometimes they are engaged in a close fight with their adversaries, and know not how to wield their spiritual armour to advantage; sometimes they are out of the way, and know not how to get into it again; and therefore they need some to guide them into the meaning of God's word; for how can they understand, unless they be taught, Acts viii. 31. "How can I understand," says the Ethiopian eunuch, "unless some man should guide me:" and who should guide them but those who are guides by office, as the word may be rendered, Heb. xiii. 8. "Consider them who have the rule over you," or who are your guides. This, as the end of a gospel-ministry, is promised in Isa. xxx. 20, 21. "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into corners any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; And thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." It is impossible we should condescend on all the particular intentions or ends a people should propose to themselves in calling a gospel-minister; and therefore we shall conclude all this in one, which is sure to comprehend them.

8. They should seek to have one who may answer in some measure Timothy's character, with respect to the church of the Philippians, Phil. ii. 20. one who may naturally take care of them, that is, one who may, out of love to their souls, affectionately, prudently, carefully, and with impartial boldness, open and apply the word, dispense the sacraments, and administer discipline, for the instruction of the ignorant, strengthening the weak, comforting the disconsolate, affecting the impenitent, reproofing the faulty, recovering wanderers, directing and helping forward those who doubt and halt; that he may both save himself and them, to

the praise and glory of God's grace. We shall not insist upon each of these particulars, which would require not one or two, but many sermons, which suits not our present design. We shall therefore proceed, in the

Second place, to inquire, How a people should make it appear that they were acting upon these designs in their calling a gospel-minister. This inquiry might be understood, either to respect their own satisfaction, or the satisfaction of the word, or of the minister himself as to this matter; but time not allowing us to be so particular, we shall hold the inquiry in the general; and in answer to it we say,

1. A people should discover their designs to be such as we have mentioned, by a punctual attendance upon all the ordinances, to be by him dispensed in public or private. Thus we see it was with Cornelius; he not only waited on himself, but he called together those on whom he had any influence. "And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends," Acts x. 24. Those who will not give attendance to the public dispensation of the word, and the private instructions, either family or personal, but withdraw, we cannot think these persons had the right end before them in calling a gospel-minister: surely, had they been right in their aims, they would have been ready to say with Cornelius, "We are all here present," &c.

2. They should not only present their bodies upon such occasions, but they should sit themselves in God's sight, to hear all things whatever are commanded of God by his servants. "We are all here present," says Cornelius to Peter, "to hear all things that are commanded thee of God," Acts x. 33. To give attendance to the ordinances, either more public or private, or any other design than this, is to "offer the sacrifice of fools," contrary to that injunction of the wise man, Eccl. v. 1. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools." When we come to God's ordinances, we must come to hear what he speaks to us.

3. They should evidence the honesty of their designs, by obeying the word which they hear at his mouth; they should comply with all the commands of God, and say to their minister, as the people of Israel said to Moses, Deut. v. 27. "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." For, as the apostle James well observes, "It is not the hearer of the word, but the doer who is blessed of God;" James i. 25. As we must hear and do so our attendance must not be limited, but our ear must be opened to reproofs, and the most terrible denunciations of wrath from God, as well as to the sweet promises and charming discoveries of the glory of Christ, the beauties of religion, the surprising happiness of the saints in heaven; and there must not only be obedience to these commands, which may bring in honour, external gain, and pleasure, by our compliance, but these also must be obeyed, which may bring us under the lash of wicked men's tongues, and expose us to reproach, hazard, and ignominy, in the world. All things whatsoever are commanded of God must be punctually obeyed without reserve.

4. There must be a submitting to all the ordinances of God. Both this obedience and submission you will find spoken of, Heb. xiii. 17. "Obey

them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for this is unprofitable for you." The word rendered *obey*, signifies properly a believing upon persuasion, and respects our belief of the truths proposed by them, and a compliance with our duty that way; and, on the other hand, this submission has a respect to the power they have over their people for edification, and not for destruction; that is, that authority they have for admonishing, reproof, rebuking, and censuring offenders; and by a submission to them in the dispensation of these ordinances of Christ, reproof and censure, I mean, they are to evidence to all, the uprightness and Christian sincerity in their designs.

5. They are to evince their designs to be justifiable, by a careful diligence in applying to their minister upon all occasions; when they are under difficulties, when they are in the dark as to duty, when they have to do with corruptions which they cannot get mastered, when under the Lord's hand, and so of all other exigencies of the like nature. For as the "priest's lips should preserve or keep knowledge, so the people should ask the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, Mal. ii. 7. And those who are sick, are bid "send for the elders or ministers of the church to pray over them," James v. 14. Those who have the advantage of a gospel minister, are indispensably obliged to acquaint him with the state of their souls, when there is any thing peculiar in it, and when they are reduced to any strait or extremity: And that, 1. Because God has laid it upon them as a duty, in that forecited Mal. ii. 7. "The people should ask the law at his mouth." 2. Because otherwise he will be at a loss in his bringing messages to you, if he mistake your case, or be unacquainted with it; how can he direct you, if he understand not your state and condition? The Lord gives no immediate revelation now, we have no warrant to expect any such thing; and therefore the way wherein ministers ordinarily come to understand their people's condition is by themselves, who upon this ground are called to have recourse to their ministers. 3. They should acquaint their ministers with their circumstances, because they are the people's mouth to God; and if they be not acquainted with the circumstances and condition of the flock, how shall they, according to their duty, hold up the case of their people to God, as they are indispensably obliged to do, and that in public, in secret, and in private?

6. Once more, and we have done: A people may and should prove their intentions honest, by a diligent application to their own proper work and business, with respect to his furtherance in their designs. Every member of the congregation should be helpful to him, in contributing their utmost assistance to him in his work. A minister may spend his strength in vain, if elders in their place, masters of families in theirs, and every particular person in his station, do not join, by prayer and otherwise, in assisting their ministers. Then do men appear sincere in their designs, for the glory of God and their own salvation, when every one puts to his hand to the work, and endeavours the removal of what may retard and obstruct its progress and success; and likewise studies by all means to strengthen the minister's hands, that he may not be discouraged, diverted or taken off from his work. In fine, then do a

people appear single in their aims, when their words, their hearts, their hands go one way, and all they do is levelled at the ends mentioned, the glory of God, in the conversion, edification, and salvation of souls. I proceed now,

THIRDLY, To inquire into the reasons of the doctrine, why a faithful gospel-minister coming amongst a people, will be careful to understand their design or intent in calling him. And,

1. This will be the desire of a gospel-minister, because a mistake in this matter will be of very dangerous consequence to the people. That people may be influenced by wrong and sinister ends and motives in this matter, is beyond all peradventure. They may design the "gratification of their itching ears" by the preacher's gifts, as the prophet Ezekiel's hearers did; they may seek the gospel-ordinances for a charm as it were, that they may sit down and rest upon them, as many people do, like those with whom the prophet Jeremiah had to do, who said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Or they may design the strengthening of factions and parties; or to get occasion to mock, as many do now in our days. These and the like sinister designs may a people go upon: and there can be nothing more prejudicial to a people than to be under the influence of such intentions; since, past all peradventure, God will not sit with such an affront as is done him by this means, when that ordinance of the ministry, which he designed for the good of souls, and his glory, is prostitute, and made subservient to quite different, nay, opposite designs: and surely a faithful gospel-minister, who will have a tender regard to the salvation of his people, cannot choose but be solicitous to understand that they are not in so dangerous a mistake.

2. The knowledge of this will be of great use to clear his call. It is a great evidence that God designs good to a people when they call a gospel-minister upon such designs; and it cannot but go a great length towards his satisfaction as to God's calling him to work among them, in order to the compassing the great designs of his ministry. When Peter got the account before spoken of from Cornelius, he is further confirmed as to the hand of God in his coming to him, in compliance with his desire.

3. If upon inquiry they be found to be such as we have mentioned, it will be a great comfort to him, in grappling with the difficulties he may meet with in the discharge of his duty. It will give a great deal of satisfaction to him to know that those for whose sake he runs those hazards, and grapples with these difficulties, have the same aims, and are joining in the same design with him. In fine, the right management of his whole work depends very much upon his knowledge of his people's intentions; and therefore it is no wonder to be inquisitive into them, since by his acquaintance with these he may be capacitated to further both his own and their salvation.

We might for improvement of this point, discourse to you at length of the necessity of a gospel-minister's inquiring into his own designs in undertaking the charge of a people. The arguments made use of to discover the reasonableness of inquiring after the people's design, conclude no less strongly with respect to the minister's. We might likewise discourse to you of the way how he is to manifest the integrity and sincerity of his aims;

but time will not allow us to enter upon these things, and you heard the minister's duty so fully and largely discoursed of within these few days, namely, at the ordination, that we judge it needless to enter upon that subject; and therefore all the improvement we design, of what has been said, shall be despatched in a short address to you of this congregation.

You have called me to labour among you in the work of the gospel; upon your call I have come; I ask therefore to what intent sent ye for me? What did ye design in this matter? Was it to hear what God has to say to you, that God's worship may be ordered according to his own appointment, that you may be brought to acquaintance with Christ, or that you be established in his ways? Were these and the like the designs you had in view? Were these the motives influenced you? If you narrowly look into your own hearts, and make an impartial inquiry, you may readily come to understand what your aims have been; and for your help, I would only in God's name, pose your consciences with a question or two, that may be of use. 1. Dare you, without heart-condemning, as in the sight of God, say, that in calling a minister you had respect to the command of God. Was it duty that moved you, or did custom and your own ease influence you? 2. Dare you hold up your face and say, that it was a taste of God's goodness in ordinances, that made you desire them, that you might grow thereby? 3. Did this desire lead you much to the throne of grace to pray for a minister, that God might send you one "according to his own heart, that might feed you with knowledge and understanding?" 4. When you saw any prospect of the return of your prayers, as to a gospel-ministry, were you careful to plead that the blessing might come along?

What say ye to these things? Give God, give conscience justice; let conscience speak freely, and tell whether things be so or not. They must either own, that there was not a regard to the command, that there was not a desire after the sincere milk of the word, occasioned by a taste of the Lord's goodness, that there was not that serious application to God by prayer, either for a minister, or for the blessing of the ordinance; or that there was; and this will cast you all into two classes. *1st*, Those who have not been so employed in this matter, and consequently have not been acting for right ends. And, *2dly*, Those who have been busied in duty, in the way just now mentioned. To each of these a word. And,

1st, As for you who have not had a regard to your duty in this matter, who have not been wrestling with God in prayer, that God might send you a minister with the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, to you we say,

1. Your designs are not such as God will approve of. Had they been such as we mentioned in the former part of this discourse, then surely they would have led you to earnest wrestling with God, for his directions, who only can point to one that is meet to answer those blessed ends.

2. You are guilty of horrible wickedness. You have committed a great provocation, in calling a minister upon any other design. God designed them for the ends formerly mentioned, and no other; and your calling them upon other aims, is an endeavour to counteract God, prostitute his ordinance, and serve your lusts of that which God designed for his own glory.

3. Whatever good others may get by the gospel, you have no reason to look for any. God may answer you according to the idols of your own hearts: and when he satisfies the soul of the hungry with good things, he may send leanness to you. When he gives a commission to the word to enlighten, convert, confirm, and strengthen others, you have reason to fear that it may have a commission to make you blind, deaf, and dead.

4. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you; lie in the dust before God; endeavour to get your hearts affected with your guilt, that you may be deeply humbled and abased before him whom you have provoked to anger.

5. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Let us know by your carriage that you are really penitent, and that now you have got the right designs in view; and this you may do by a close attendance upon all the ordinances, by hearing and doing whatever is enjoined you of God, and by all the other ways mentioned in the doctrinal parts of this discourse.

6. And, lastly. Whether you hear or forbear, yet we tell you, the kingdom of God is come near unto you; whatever you design, the Lord has given you a gospel-day; and if our gospel be hid from you, it is because you are lost, the god of this world having blinded your eyes, that you should not discern the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.

As to the second sort of persons, those who have been importunate with God, and have had an eye to his command in this work, to you we say,

1. This your conduct, past all peradventure, is no mean evidence of the sincerity of your good intentions; and this is certainly matter of thankfulness, and is moreover a ground to hope, that the Lord may not altogether frustrate your desires.

2. Do not think your work is over. Wrestle, plead strongly with God for the blessing of gospel-ordinances; whoever plants or waters, it is only God that gives the increase; and therefore if you mean to grow under the means, be instant in prayer for the blessing on them; plead that God may not send leanness to your souls, while he provides plenty of spiritual provision for you.

3. Beware of sitting down upon gospel privileges. You may, if you do so, lose what you have wrought, and justly bring the sincerity of your aims in question. There is nothing more ordinary, than upsitting of this sort. Persons, who it may be would say, O had they a gospel-dispensation! how glad would they be, how carefully would they improve it; and yet when they get what they seek, their improvement is in no measure answerable to their resolutions. Take heed of, and guard against this.

4. Let there be a suitable care to evidence your sincerity in this matter, by the whole of your deportment. If you turn careless in attending ordinances, if you hear, but do not, if you neglect your own work, and be wanting to yourselves in this matter, then who will believe your sincerity? who can believe it? your own consciences will accuse you; and "if your hearts condemn you, God is greater than your hearts, and knows all things," 1 John iii. 20.

5. If you find that the Lord has made endeavours successful, take care that you sacrifice not to your own net, and burn incense to your drag. God is a holy and a jealous God, and will not be mocked; and if you begin to rob him of his glory, he will get him glory in such a way as may lay you low, and make you smart severely for your own folly.

6. If the Lord give you the gospel-light, then walk in the light while you have it. Carry like children of the light and of the day, work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling: for none of us can tell how soon our gospel-day may be gone, and the night succeed wherein none can work.

We shall conclude this discourse with a few general advices to all of you. Would you have our ministry made successful? would you obtain the real advantage of gospel-ordinances, and have our meetings such as may be matter of rejoicing both to you and me in the day of the Lord? then we entreat, beseech, nay, and obtest you by the mercies of God, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you would have your own souls and ours to be saved.

1. Pray for us. As a minister is indispensably obliged to mind his people before God, and to carry them ever upon his heart, so are they obliged to pray for their minister: "Pray for us," says the apostle, Heb. xiii. 18. "for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly." To give weight to this advice, I shall lay before you a few considerations. And,

(1.) Consider, ministers are not sufficient of themselves for this work; the work is great, weighty, and important, and the difficulties are many; and who is sufficient for it? Sure ministers are not; for if the apostle said with justice of himself, "That he was not of himself sufficient to think any thing as he ought," 2 Cor. iii. 5. then much more may gospel-ministers now-a-days own it to be so with them; and therefore all their sufficiency is only of God, from whom suitable and needful supplies should be sought.

(2.) Consider that in their plenty and fulness you shall have plenty. They are indispensably obliged to lay out what they receive for you, to spend and be spent in the work and service of your faith: and therefore it is your interest that they abound, since it is for your sake they labour; and the more so, if you be instrumental by your prayers, in procuring advantages and supplies for them.

(3.) Consider, that they are exposed to great hazards for your sake, and therefore you are to contribute your utmost to their assistance this way, wherein you may be most helpful to them. They being made watchmen, do thereby become the butt of Satan's malice; and the more faithful they are, the more will he oppose them, and seek their ruin. The enemy's principal design is sure to be against the watchman, because he prevents the surprising of his people by Satan, at least it is his business to do so; and therefore no stone will be left unturned, in order to his ruin. 1. Satan will endeavour to lay him asleep, and make him turn secure, that he may neglect his post. 2. If he miss of this, he will endeavour to fill him with disturbance and fear, that so he may be diverted from his duty, and made to quit his post. Or, 3. He will ply his corruptions, that he may, by attending to them, and striving against them take him off from, or discourage him in his opposition to those of others.

4. He will endeavour to blind his eyes by false appearances, that so he may give false alarms : and this will weaken his credit, and make people not believe his warnings. 5. He will endeavour to amuse him with great appearances of danger where there is none ; that his eyes may turn off from those things which may really endanger his flock. And, 6. He will endeavour to beget and cherish jealousies betwixt his people and him, whereby his warnings will be less regarded, and his hands be weakened, and his heart be discouraged. 7. If these fail, he will endeavour to get him removed ; if he see the gospel like to prove successful, then he will take care to find out ways to oblige the watchman to remove from his post. And, 8. If he fail of this, he will endeavour to kill him, either by multiplying troubles and griefs, or else by more direct methods, employing his emissaries and servants to take away his life ; and this, by God's permission, for the punishment of a people's sins, has proven successful. Surely these and a great many more methods, used by Satan, the wicked world, pretended friends, and their own corruptions, against the ministers of the gospel, and all upon the people's account, should make them careful in praying to God in their behalf, that they may be saved from the attempts of all their spiritual adversaries, and may be made to grow in graces and gifts. Pray for much grace to your minister, that he may persuade, as knowing the terrors of the Lord ; that he may deal tenderly with you, as having himself had acquaintance with soul-sickness on account of sin ; that he may take you to Jesus safely, as having himself been with him ; that he may comfort you with the consolations wherewith he has been comforted of God. In fine, that he may speak, because he himself has not only believed, but experienced the work of grace upon his own soul, as one that has tasted that sin is an evil and bitter thing, and has found that Christ is useful, is sufficient, is precious ; and that he may pray acceptably for you, as one who has found acceptance in his own behalf. Pray likewise for gifts to him, knowledge in the mystery of God, and of Christ, and of faith : that he may have much spiritual wisdom, zeal, boldness, and courage, to fit him for his work ; and withal, that the Lord may give a door of utterance.

(4.) Consider, that a careful attendance to your duty, in holding up your minister's case, will be a great mean to promote love, mutual love, betwixt you and him ; and this will help to break Satan's engines. Nothing contributes more to the furtherance and success of one's ministry in a place, than much love, mutual kindness betwixt a minister and people ; and no love so useful this way, as that which vents itself in prayer for one another, and is cherished by this means. But,

2. I entreat you may carefully attend ordinances, public, private, and secret ; and catechising as the Lord shall give occasion. This will make us cheerfully go about these duties, if we see you studying to make advantage of them : this will be profitable to you ; it will discourage our enemies ; it will rejoice our heart, and be a credit to religion.

3. Any advantage you receive, be sure that ye attribute it entirely to God ; beware of placing it to the minister's account, who is only the instrument ; if you rob God of the glory, and give it to the instrument, you may by this provoke the Lord to blast your minister, and to withdraw from him his presence ; which will soon make you see, that it is not the minister that can do any thing. Give God his due, and so ac-

count of us as the servants of Christ, and the stewards of the mysteries of the gospel; and when ye get any good by it, put it all to God's account; bless him for it; and let the instrument have an interest in your affections and prayers, that he may be further useful to you and others.

4. Once more, and we have done. Do not count us your enemies, if we tell you the truth; we must by any means be free, in laying open your sins, and in carrying home the conviction of them to your consciences; nor dare we gratify any, by holding our peace in this matter; for if we please men, then are we not the servants of Christ; and if any soul die in its sin by our silence, then we bring the blood of souls upon our own heads, and hazard our own souls. We are obliged, by the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to consciences; and if the more we love, the less we are loved, then God will require it at your hands. But whether you will hear, or whether you forbear, we must, as we shall give answer to the great Shepherd of the sheep, deal plainly with you. Consider but that one scripture, Lev. xix. 17. and ye will see reproof to be an act of great love, and that the neglect of it in God's account is hatred: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him;" or, as the last clause may be rendered, That thou bear not sin for him. Now, if you follow these advices, and if there be a single eye to God, and close dependence upon him, both in minister and people, mutual love and helpfulness, and a joint endeavour to promote the great design of the ministry, the glory of God in our own salvation, then our labour shall not be in vain, but shall be blessed with increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us.

THE
GREAT CONCERN
OF
SALVATION.

PART I.

A DISCOVERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE; OR, THE GUILTY SINNER CONVICTED.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.—
ROM. iii. 23.

WHOEVER considers his present condition, will soon see, that his great business and chief concern, lies in three important inquiries: “What have I done?” Jer. viii. 6. “What shall I do to be saved?” Acts xvi. 30. “What shall I render to the Lord?” Psal. cxvi. 12. The answer of the first will make way for the second, and that will give occasion for the third.

Though wise men have busied their heads, and toiled themselves with wearisome inquiries after happiness; yet none of them could ever give men a satisfying answer to any one of these three queries. But what they by their wisdom could not do, that God, in his infinite wisdom and unparalleled goodness has done, to the satisfaction of all rational inquirers, in the scriptures of truth.

If it be inquired, What have we done? our text answers, “All men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” If the question be put, What shall we do to be saved? look Acts xvi. 31. and there we are bid “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved.” In fine, if we ask, What shall we render to the Lord for his matchless and unparalleled favour to us? we may turn to Psal. cxvi. 13. and there we are told what to do, “I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” And much to the same purpose is that of the prophet, Micah vi. 8. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

The great concernment of gospel-ministers lies in the second inquiry. It is our principal business to persuade men and women to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to commend our blessed Maker to poor sinners. But since we come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, it is necessary we lay the foundation in a discovery of man's natural state. Before we offer Christ, we shall show you need him; before we tender mercy, we shall endeavour to represent your misery; before you be called to repentance, we will show you are sinners

who stand in need of repentance. And upon this account we have made choice of the words now read, which do offer a fair occasion for a discovery of your sin, and of your misery on that account.

We shall not spend time in considering the connection of the words, which may perhaps fall more conveniently in our way.

The text is a general assertion, in which all stand convicted of, and concluded under sin : for,

The persons to whom sin is attributed, are not some single persons, to a seclusion of others, but all mankind. It is not some degenerate wretches in the heathen world ; but all, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, high and low, who have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

It is not asserted of them, that they may sin, that they are fallible, and if artfully plied by a temptation, may be taken off their feet ; but that they are already involved in the guilt of sin, and have thereby come short of the glory of God. The original word, which is here rendered *come short*, is emphatical ; it properly signifies to fall short of the mark one aims at, or to fall behind in a race, whereby the prize is lost. Man in his first estate was in a fair way for glory ; power he had to run the race, and the devil had no power to stop him in it ; he had not such weights as we now are clogged with, and yet he fell short of the glory of God ; *i. e.* he lost that glory in the enjoyment of God, which he had so good a prospect of ; he lost the image of God, which was his glory, given him of God, with all the consequential advantages of it.

We need not draw any doctrine from the words ; they themselves do express that which we design to insist upon.

Doct. "That all men and women, descending from Adam in an ordinary way, have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God."

This doctrine, standing so clear in the words, supersedes any further proof ; and therefore we shall not spend time in producing other scriptures asserting the same thing.

Before we apply this truth, we shall,

I. Premise a few propositions for clearing the way to the further explication of this great and momentous truth.

II. We shall inquire what sin formally implies.

III. Mention a property or two of it.

IV. Inquire into the import of this *all* in the text.

V. Show what is implied in this expression, Come short of the glory of God.

VI. Whence it is that all have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God.

Now of each of these in order. And,

I. We shall premise a few propositions for clearing the way to what we further design in the explication of this truth. The

Ist Proposition we offer to you is, That God is the absolute and independent Sovereign of the world. Men do often usurp an absolute power over their subjects, and claim a blind and unlimited obedience ; but they had need take heed they do not invade God's right, and that which is his Sovereign prerogative. He, and he only, is absolute Lord

and King of the earth, as the Psalmist sings, in Psal. xlvii. 2. "The Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth." And indeed he alone is fit to manage so great a province; forasmuch as there is "none among the gods like unto him, neither are there any works like unto his," Psal. lxxxvi. 8. His claim is founded upon the excellency of his nature, Jer. x. 6, 7. "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might, who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain, forasmuch as there is none like unto thee:" And upon his creation of all things, "The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his, and he made it," Psal. xcv. 3, 5. "O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant, I have found thee, thou art my servant, O Israel," Is. xlv. 21. In fine, his preservation of all things, and the manifold mercies he loads his creatures with, do give him the noblest title to absolute dominion; and his glorious perfections of wisdom, power, holiness, and justice, do not only fit him for it, but make his sway desirable to all who understand their own interest.

2d, Take this proposition, God the absolute Sovereign of the world has prescribed laws to all his creatures, by which he governs them. Not to speak of these laws which he has given to the inanimate part of the creation, he has prescribed men their work, he has given them his laws, whereby they are indispensibly obliged to live. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy," James i. 12. "The Lord is Judge, King, and Lawgiver," Is. xxxiii. 22. We are not in any thing left altogether arbitrary. He who has said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther," has dealt so likewise with man; he has limited him on every hand by his holy laws, the incontestable statutes of heaven. We are obliged to eat, drink, sleep, converse, and do every thing by rule; God has set us our bounds as to all these things, and thither should we come and no further. Indeed, these limits God has set us are not such as he sets to the waves of the tumultuous sea: no, he deals with us in a way suited to our nature; he has set such limits as none can pass, till they act in direct contradiction to their very natures, till they abandon a due consideration of that wherein their greatest concern and chiefest interest lies; as will appear plain enough from that which we offer in the,

3d place, for the clearing the way, That the great Lawgiver of the world has annexed rewards and punishments to those laws he has made. The authority of God is a tender point indeed. He has said, "he will not give his glory to another," and therefore he has taken care to guard the laws he has made with suitable rewards and punishments. God indeed is not obliged to give man any further reward for his obedience, than what flows from the obedience itself, which is sufficient to be a reward to itself: for "in keeping God's commands there is great reward," Ps. xix. 11. But such is his matchless and unbounded goodness, that he proposed no less reward of obedience than eternal life: a reward suitable not to man's obedience, which deserves no such thing, but to the bounty of the giver. On the other hand, again, he has annexed a dreadful penalty to his laws; break them we may if we will; for God has not made it impossible we should; but if we do, then the heavy curse of God will follow us. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The same mouth that pro-

nounced law, pronounces the curse, Gal. iii. 10. And we know, whom he curses they are cursed, and whom he blesseth they are blessed indeed.

4th, These laws, which God hath given us to walk by, have a fourfold property mentioned by the apostle, Rom. vii. 12. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good;" and ver. 14. "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

1. We say it is *holy*; the law of God is the exact transcript of the holy will of God. There is nothing in it disagreeable to, or unworthy of the holy God, who always acts like himself, and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, or look upon sin.

2. It is *just*. It is the very measure of all justice among men. It is a law that gives God his due and man his: nay, man has no right or property in, or title to, any thing but from this law. What this makes his, is so, and no more can justly be claimed.

3. It is *good*. It is not a law made to gratify the lusts of an earth worm, it is not a law made without regard to the advantage of those who live under it: but God, in framing his law, has exactly considered what might be for man's good, both in time and in eternity; and has, in matchless goodness and infinite wisdom, ordered the matter so, that duty and interest go ever together, and a man can never act against his duty but he wrongs his real interest, even abstracting from the consideration of future rewards and punishments in another life.

4. The law is *spiritual*. It is not such a law as is prescribed by man, which only reaches the outward man; no, it is spiritual, reaching to the soul and all its inward actings. It prescribes bounds to the spirits of men, obliging them to inward obedience and conformity to it in their motions, inclinations, and affections; not a thought, nay, nor the circumstance of a thought, but falls under this spiritual and extensive law, which made the Psalmist say, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad," Psal. cxix. 96.

The way being thus cleared, we shall now, in the

Second place, show you what sin is. Sin, which is here charged upon all, properly and formally imports,

1. A want of conformity to the law, of which we have been discoursing. The law requires and enjoins duty. It obliges us not only to actions so and so qualified, but to have a right principle of action; it not only enjoins holy thoughts, holy words, and holy actions, but moreover it requires that the very frame and temper of our hearts be holy; and when we fall short of this, then we sin. That the law obliges us as to the frame of our heart, is plain, since it requires that the tree be good as well as the fruit; that the worship and service we perform to God be with the whole strength, soul, and heart.

2. Sin imports a transgression of the law, for "sin is a transgression of the law," I John iii. 4. Indeed, when transgression is taken in a large sense, it comprehends all sin; but it may be, and is frequently restricted to actual sins, and sins of commission: as the former branch of the description is to original sin, and sins of omission. Sin is an opposition to the law of God. God bids do, arise, work; man transgresses, breaks the command, and sits still idle. God forbids such and such sinful actions, man does them in opposition to the command of God, which flows from a contempt of God's authority; so that we may say,

3. That every sin implies, in its formal nature, contempt of God, as that which is its source. Sin flows from a secret enmity of heart against the Almighty, and therefore carries in it a high contempt of him. It may be, men are so blind that they cannot discern any such thing in it; but God makes breaking the law, and despising or contemning the law, to be all one, Amos ii. 4. "Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked." Sin in most men's eyes is a harmless thing; but how far otherwise would it be if its nature were seen in a just light by the eye of faith; if we saw it trampling upon God's authority, goodness, and holiness, and even endeavouring as it were to ungod him.

But that ye may further understand what sin is, we shall, in the

Third place, mention a twofold inseparable property or adjunct of sin, with which it is ever attended. And,

1. Sin is the defilement of the soul; sin is a filthy thing. The beauty, the glory of man, consists in his conformity to the holy and pure law of God, and in as far as he deviates from that, in so far is he defiled and polluted. Every sin hath a Satan in it, and robs the soul of its beauty, occasions a sort of loathsomeness, whereby, in the eyes of God, and even of itself, it becomes ugly and abominable; it is the abominable thing which God hates, "Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate," saith the Lord, Jer. xlv. 4. The natural state of man is, upon the account of this filthiness, compared to a wretched infant that is cast out "in all its natural pollutions," Ezek. xvi and to every thing else that is filthy, to puddle, mire, and dirt, and to a menstruous cloth: but yet all of them are not sufficient to give a just idea of its filthiness.

2. Sin, as it is attended with filth, so it is attended with guilt. It makes the sinner guilty; it obliges him to undergo the penalty which God hath annexed to his law; it carries ever along with it a title to the curse of God. When the law of God is considered as that which represents his holiness and spotless purity, whereby it becomes the measure and standard of all beauty, glory and purity to us; then sin, as it stands opposed to it in this respect, is looked upon as a stain, a blot, a defilement: but as the law of God carries on it the impression of his royal authority, the breach of it binds over to just punishment, for the reparation of the honour of that contemned authority.

Thus we see what it is that all men are charged with. God here lays home to them a breach of the law, represents them as condemned and guilty, deformed and defiled creatures. "All men have sinned," every one has broken the holy, just, good, and spiritual law of the great Sovereign of the world; all are guilty of a contempt of his authority, all are defiled with that abominable thing which his soul hates. Lest any one should take occasion to clear himself, and say, O I am not the person spoken of, I never contemned God, I never defiled myself, and so I am not guilty of that which is charged upon mankind. Lest any should say, I am clean, God has put a bar upon this door, by extending the charge to all without exception.

And so I come, in the,

Fourth place, to inquire into the import of this universal participle *all* in my text ; and it imports,

1st, That persons of all ages are involved in the same common misery. Young and old have sinned. The suckling upon the breast, as well as the old man that is stooping into the grave. None need envy another. The old man needs not envy the innocency of the infant of days, for the youngest carries as much sin into the world as renders it ugly, deformed, and guilty. Indeed there are who have not sinned at the rate that others have done. Children have not sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," Rom. v. 14. their age would not allow them ; but sin enough they have derived to them from Adam, to damn, to defile them.

2d, Persons of all professions, Jew and Gentile, whatever their religious profession be. The evil is not confined to those of one religion, but is extended to all : the apostle sums up all mankind, as to religion, under two heads, Jew and Gentile : and at large, in the foregoing part of this epistle, proves them both to be sinners.

3d, All ranks of persons, high and low, rich and poor. This is not an evil of which the prince can free himself more than the peasant. Those who may be shining in glistening apparel, are upon this account vile and filthy as the toad they cannot endure to look upon : those who may condemn or absolve others, may themselves be under a sentence of condemnation ; nay, it really is so with all who are not saved from their sins. Even these very men who have sometimes forgot themselves so far, as to advance themselves above the laws, are yet not only subject to God's law, but lying under an obligation to punishment on account of their breaches of this holy, just, and good law.

4. Persons in all generations are guilty. It was not only some poor wretches in the old world which God swept off the face of the earth by a flood, that have sinned, but persons of all ages, ranks, and qualities, in all generations. There is not one exception among all the natural descendants of Adam, man nor woman, great nor small, rich nor poor, king nor beggar, all have sinned, from the greatest to the least. None can justly upbraid another with what he has done in this matter, since all are in the provocation : "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

And this leads us to that which we did, in the next place, propose to discourse of to you, namely,

Fifth, The import of this coming short of the glory of God. And this takes in or implies,

1st, That man hath fallen short of that glory which he had by the conformity of his nature to God. Man is said, 1 Cor. xi. 7. to be "the image and glory of God ;" and indeed so was he in his first and best estate. O what of God was there in innocent Adam ! A mind full of light ; how wonderfully did it represent that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all ! A pure soul, the exact transcript of the divine purity ! The rest of the creatures had in them some darker representations of the glory of God's wisdom and power, but only man, of all the creatures in the lower world, was capable to represent the holiness, righteousness, and purity, and other rational perfections, of the ever-blessed deity, and upon this account man was "the glory of God."

God, as it were, gloried in him as the master-piece of the visible creation, in whom alone more of God was to be seen than in all the rest beside. This man has now lost; he has fallen short of the beauty and glory which made him "the glory of God."

2d, Man has lost the glory he had, as he was the deputy of the great God in this lower world. He was made lord of God's hand-works upon earth; and all the creatures in it paid their homage to him, when they came and received their names from him in paradise: but now the "crown is fallen from his head;" he has come short of this glory; the creatures refuse subjection to him.

3d, Man has come short of the glory he had in the enjoyment of God in paradise. It was man's glory, honour and happiness, to be allowed a more than ordinary familiarity with God. God and Adam conversed together in paradise. He was allowed the company of God: this made his state happy indeed. What could man want, while the all-sufficient God kept up so close, so blessed and comfortable a familiarity with him, and daily loaded him with his favours? But this he has come short of.

4th, Man has come short of that glory he had the prospect of. God set him fairly on the way, and did furnish him sufficiently for a journey to eternal, unchangeable, never-fading glory; but this he has come short of; and this indeed follows natively upon the former. This is indeed much, but we conceive this is not all that the expression has in it: nay, certainly there is more in it; this falling short, though it only seems to point at the negative, yet certainly it takes in the positive; and we therefore say that this expression, in the

5th place, implies not only man's loss of his original beauty and glory, in conformity to the image of God, but that he has fallen in the mire, and is defiled by sin. He who sometime a-day was the image and glory of God, is now more filthy than the ground he treads on, than the mire of the street, than the loathsome toad.

6th, Not only has he lost the dominion he had, but he is become a slave to sin. He who sometime a-day looked like a god in the world, is now debased down to hell. He to whom the creatures once veiled as to their sovereign, now daily stands in danger of his life, by them, and lies open to the insults of the meanest of them.

7th, Not only has he lost the sweet and soul-ravishing communion he had with God, but now he is, as it were, scarce capable to look towards him; the sight of God, which once was his life, is now to him as death.

8th, Not only has man forfeited his title to future happiness, but which is worse, he is by sin entitled to future, eternal, inconceivable misery and woe. A dreadful coming short this is indeed. From how high a hope, into what an inconceivable abyss of misery and woe, is poor man fallen by sin! "The crown is fallen from his head." He was a little hence all beauty, glory, excellency, and comeliness; but now, alas! we may groan out an *Ichabod* over him! Where is the glory?

We come now in the

Sixth place, to inquire into the source and spring of all this misery and woe. How and whence is it that all are involved in the guilt of sin: and that this sad and afflicting calamity flows?

1st, From the guilt of Adam's first sin. Adam, by the holy, wise,

just, and good appointment of God, stood in the room of all his posterity. Had he stood, in him we all had stood, and retained the innocence and integrity of our natures, the favour, love, and kindness of heaven; but he falling into sin, in him we all sinned; and by the disobedience of this one man, we all were made sinners; as the apostle doth at large discourse, Rom. v. from the 12th verse, and downwards. This, this is the poisoned spring whence all our sin, all our sorrow and misery flows.

2*d*, This flows from the natural depravity of the mind of man, that is transmitted to us from our progenitors. "We are shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us." We received a fatal wramp when first formed in the womb, as the Psalmist complains, Psal. li. 5. And indeed there is none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Our infected parents transfer to us the infection of sin. Sin runs in our blood, and our natures have a natural inclination to "evil, only to evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5.

3*d*, This flows from abounding temptations. As our hearts are wicked, and set only on evil; so every thing, in this present disorder on account of sin, is suited to carry on the infection. The creatures by reason of sin are made subject to vanity. They are made subservient to the lusts of men: the devil and our corrupt hearts daily abuse them to this end; and by these means it is that all men have sin, and thereby come short of the glory of God.

The application is that which we principally designed in the choice of this subject; and therefore we have but named things in the doctrinal part. And now we come to improve the whole.

That which we design chiefly in the improvement of this, is a use of conviction. Some days ago, we came to you proclaiming the grace, mercy, and love of God in Christ Jesus; now we come to accuse you as guilty of sin. The design of our doing so is indeed the advancement of the glory of Christ, and in him of the grace and mercy of the Lord God. But our present work in itself is such, as doth not in its own nature look that way, though by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, it be subservient thereunto.

"You are all here present before the Lord, to hear what God the Lord will speak unto you;" and, as Ehud said to Eglon, king of Moab, so we say to you, "We have a message from God to you," Judges iii. 20. A sad message, not much unlike to that which Ehud brought to Eglon, a message of death. We come this day to you, to implead you in God's name as guilty of sin. The message is not to some particular gross offenders, but to every soul now "present before the Lord;" to the child, to the young man and maid, to those of riper years, and to them who are old and stoop under the weight of many years.

"In the name, and at the instance of the great, the terrible God, the King, the Lord of hosts," whose name is dreadful among the Heathen, Mal. i. 14. "that confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers," Isa. xlv. 26. we are to implead, impeach, and accuse every soul here present as guilty of sin. Hitherto we have spoken in the general, which, it may be, has been no better to you than Nathan's parable to David. It may be some of you have been saying, that the soul that has sinned has deservedly fallen short of the glory of

God, and fallen under the wrath of God : but now what we said before in general, we come to say in particular to every one of you, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man, thou art the woman, thou art the child, the young man, or the maid, who hast sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God."

Now, that we may be successful in this work, and bring you, if possible, to understand your state and condition, we shall,

First, Read and open, as it were, the charge and indictment, we do in God's name bring against you.

Secondly, Lead witnesses, whereby we shall prove it against you all in general.

Thirdly, Endeavour particularly by arguments to make our charge good. *1st*, Against children and young men ; *2d*, Against these of a middle age ; and *3d*, Against old men and women. This we will do, as it were, by taking you to the places, the companies, and occasions, where you have sinned, and incurred the guilt now charged on you.

Fourthly, Show what satisfaction our great Lord demands against such traitors.

Fifthly, What reason he has to require it. And then,

Sixthly, Endeavour to represent to you your misery upon this account.

First, The charge we lay against you, is not some petty, some small misdemeanor, that may be atoned for by a bare acknowledgment, by some pitiful mock 'God have mercy upon me.' No ; the charge draws deep, it is no less crime than that of sin, sin against the great Sovereign of the world. Ye all have sinned. O ! if ye knew what a world of evil is in that cursed thing, sin ! When we say, ye have sinned, you are ready to say, O ! we know that well enough. Is this all ye have to say ? When we heard of such a dreadful thing as a charge and indictment in the name of God against us, when we heard of leading witnesses, and all the other parts of a trial, we did apprehend there was some terrible thing a coming, some dreadful unheard-of evil to be laid home to our door ; but now we find there is nothing said against us, but only that we are sinners, and who will deny this ? who knows it not ? and this is but the common lot, "God be merciful to us," we are all sinners ; and there the repentance of most is done ; their sores are healed, and they can live, and it may be die, without any fear in this case : such light apprehensions have most part of sin.

These, it may be, are the apprehensions of not a few of you, upon hearing the charge ; but if there be not blind minds, shut eyes, deaf ears, and dreadfully hard hearts amongst us, ere all be done, some of you will, it may be, change your minds, and think this a very dreadful and heavy charge. If God would now concur by his Spirit, and enable us to manage our work to purpose, if he would let out the convincing influences of his Spirit, the weight of this charge would press you so as to make your hearts fail and sink within you.

Sin is an ordinary word, a little word, and most men do apprehend that there is but little in it ; but mistake it not ; there is much in it, more than angels or men can ever discover, or fully unfold. Yet that all this that we have said may not seem a groundless allegation, I shall, *1st*, Set up to you some glasses, wherein you may get a view of sin's ugly face ; or I shall, as Balak did to Balaam, take you to such places, where

you may get a sight of its formidable nature, power, and malignity. *2dly*, I shall tell you of some dreadful and monstrous evils that are lodged in every sin, the least idle thought or word. And, *3dly*, I shall mention some killing aggravations that your sins are clothed with, that put an accent upon them, and enhance their guilt. And this will let you see the great evil of sin; this will open your indictment.

1st, We shall give you some prospects of sin. It may be, many of you do think but very little of sin; but here I desire you to come and look at it,

1. In the glass of God's law. See the holy, the high and exalted God, exhibiting his mind and will in two tables, tables containing safe, good, holy, just, spiritual, and every way advantageous rules, for that creature whom God has taken so distinguishing and particular a care of. Well, what shall we see of sin here? Here, O here, you may see sin breaking, nay, dashing to pieces these two tables, in a worse sense than Moses did, *Exod. xxxii. 19.* Every sin, the least sin, throws them both to the ground; for, as the apostle James tells us, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," *James ii. 10.* Is it a small thing to you to trample upon, to tread under foot, the holy, the righteous law of God, that is the perfect image and representation of all his holiness and spotless purity? but if yet ye will not see the cursed nature of sin, then we bid you, in the

2d place, take a view of it in the nature of the great God, the seat of all majesty, glory, beauty, and excellency; and if you look at it here, O how ugly will it appear! Nothing in all the world contrary and opposite to the nature of God, but sin. The meanest, the most apparently deformed creature in the world, the toad, the crawling insect, carries in its nature nothing really opposite to the nature of God; sin, only sin, stands in opposition to him. This he cannot dwell with: "Evil shall not dwell with him, nor sinners stand in his sight." Such is that abhorrence that God has at sin, that, when he speaks of it, his heart, as it were, rises against it, "Oh do not that abominable thing which I hate!" in that forecited *Jer. xliv. 4.* And if yet ye will not see its sinfulness, I will take you where you may see more of it. Go take a view of it,

3. In the threatening of the law, and see there what estimate God puts on it, and what a thing it is. All the power of heaven, the anger, the fury, the vengeance of God, all are levelled at the head of sin. Take but one instance for all, in that *7th* of Joshua; there a people accustomed to victory turn their back before the enemy, fall a prey to a people devoted to destruction; nay, moreover, God, in the *12th* verse, calls all the people accursed, and tells, they cannot stand before the enemy, "neither will I be with you any more," says he. Why? what is the matter? wherefore is the heat of all this anger? what meaneth this vengeance? The matter was, there was a sin committed; Achan had taken some of the spoil of the enemy. Thus you see, one sin makes God breathe out threatenings against a whole nation. In fine, look through the book of God, and there you shall see one threatening big with temporal, another with eternal plagues, one full of external, another of internal and spiritual woes; and all as it were levelled at the head of sin. And is that a small matter which never fails to set out all the vengeance of Heaven against the person that is guilty of it? But yet this is not all; you may see more, if you look at it,

4. In the judgments of God that are abroad in the earth. Look we to one nation, there we shall see thousands falling before the avenging enemy, the sword glutted as it were with blood; men who a little before were possessed of wisdom, courage, and all those endowments which serve to enhance the worth of the sons of men, are here laid heaps upon heaps: Go we to another, there we shall see no fewer carried off by sickness and diseases, and all wearing out by time. Go to church-yards, and see what vast havock these do make; there you may see the rubbish of many generations laid heaps upon heaps. Well, see you nothing of sin in all this? What think you of all these lamentable evils, miseries, and woes? Why, see you nothing of sin in them all? Sure you are blind if you do not. I ask you, as Jehu did when he saw the dead sons of Ahab, 2 Kings x. 9. "Who slew all these?" Who brought all these sons of pride, who not long ago were strangely ruffling it out in the light of warlike glory, down to the sides of the pit? who filled your church-yards with heaps upon heaps, fathers and sons, high and low, rich and poor, of all sexes, ranks, ages, and degrees? Surely sin hath done this: for as "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12. But if still you will look upon sin as a small and light thing, we have yet another glass wherein you may have a further sight of it.

5. Enter the house of a soul under trouble of conscience; look at a Heman, and you shall hear him making a heavy moan in that 88th Psalm; there you see a man that has a soul full of trouble, oppressed with all the waves and billows of the wrath of God, almost distracted with the terrors of God. Now, if you saw one in this case crying out in anguish of spirit, nay, it may be, tearing himself, beating his breast, ask him the reason of all his distress, he will tell you, that it is sin that has done all this. He has no rest in his bones for ills that he has done, Psal. xxxviii. 3. And if yet ye have not seen enough of the sinfulness and evil of sin, I shall give you another prospect of it.

6. In the hateful, monstrous, and enormous crimes, that are committed in the world. Some sins there are which bring along with them infamy and disgrace, even before men. Human nature, as corrupt as it is, shrinks at some sins, they carry in them such an evident contrariety to the faint remains of natural light. Sins there are, which, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. v. 1. "are not so much as named among the Gentiles." Now if a man be guilty of any of these crying abominations, these crimson sins, then he becomes odious in the world. Call a man a murderer, an incestuous person, an abuser of his parents, or the like, every sober person will flee from and shun, as a pest, the company of such a one. But why? what is the matter? what is there so odious in these crimes, that every one flees from the person guilty of them? there is sin in them, and hence it is they are so hateful: and the only thing, that distinguisheth these from others, is that they have different circumstantial aggravations: for in the nature of sin they all do agree, the least and the greatest; the least sin strikes at the holy law of God, contemns the authority of the great and Supreme Lawgiver, as well as the greatest doth. And if sin be so odious when you get a fuller view of it, as it were, in these large, these great and crying provocations, it is no less so when it is less perceptible in these sins which quadrate better with our vitiated and cor-

rupted natures ; for indeed the difference among sins, as to greater and less, lies not so much in the nature of the sins, as in their different respects to our understanding, arising from the objects about which they are conversant. But, if after all these views of sin, your eyes are so blinded that you cannot see it, then come take a view of it,

7. In the case of the damned. Here, here you may have a strange, a heart-affecting view of sin's ugly face. See the poor wretches lying in bundles, boiling eternally in that stream of brimstone, roaring under the intolerable, and yet eternal anguish of their spirits. Take a survey of them in this lamentable posture. If you should see some hundreds of men, women, and children, all thrown alive into burning pitch or melted lead, would not this present you with a sad scene of misery and woe ? would not this be a dismal sight ? indeed it would be so. But all this is nothing to the unspeakable misery of the devils and damned, who have fallen into the hands of the living and sin-revenging God, and are laid in chains of massy and thick darkness, eternally depressed and sunk into the bottomless depth of the wrath of God, and choked with the steam of that lake of fire and brimstone ; and have every faculty of their soul, every joint of their body, brim-full of the fury of the eternal God : behold, and wonder at this terrible and astonishing sight ; and in this take a view of sin. Were hell now opened, and saw you the damned in chains of darkness, and if you heard their dreadful yelling, and found the steam of the bottomless pit, ye would then in every sense get some discovery of sin. It is only sin that has kindled that dreadful and inextinguishable fire of wrath, and cast the damned into it ; and it is sin that holds them there, and torments them there. If you had but a just impression of these things, how hateful would sin be to you ! And if, after all that has been said, you still imagine that sin is not so bad as we would represent it, then come once more and take a view of it,

8. In the sufferings of Christ. Here is a glass, O criminals ! wherein you may see your own face. You think it a little thing that you have sinned : nay, it may be you roll sin, "as a sweet morsel under your tongue." But come here, and see what a thing it is which you thus dreadfully mistake ! Come see it holding the sword ; O strange ! nay more, thrusting it into Christ's side ! Here, sinners, is a sight that made the earth tremble, and the sun to hide his face, as we see, Matth. xxvii. 51. Luke xxiii. 25. In this class you may see, (1.) What God's thoughts of sin are. So highly opposite to his nature is it, that the bowels of affection he had to the Son of his love, whom he so highly honoured, when the voice came from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," were not able to hold up the hand of inexorable justice from striking at him, nay, striking him dead, for the sin of the elect world. Would not that be a great proof, think ye, of the aversion of a parent to any thing, if he would rather choose to slay his son, nay, his only son, his son whom he loved most tenderly, than it should escape a mark of his displeasure ? (2.) Here you may see more of the pollution of sin than any where else. Never was there any thing that gave so just apprehensions of the stain of sin, as the death of Christ. An ingrained pollution it must indeed be, if no less will wash it out than the blood of God. (3.) Here is a dreadful evidence of the

power of sin. Never did this more appear, than when it blinded the eyes of the degenerate sons of men, so far that they could not discern "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, who was so full of grace and truth," whose divine nature daily beamed, as it were, through that of his human, in miraculous operations, works, and words, which none but God could do, but God could speak. And no less was the power of sin seen, when it hurried men headlong into that heaven-daring pitch of impiety, to imbrue their hands in the blood of God. O sinners! would you see what sin is! look at it with its hands reeking in the gore and blood of God, and tell what you think of it.

But it is like, some of you may say, What is this to the purpose? This is not the sin we are guilty of. We have never imbrued our hands in the blood of God, and so herein we cannot see our crimes. This makes nothing to that which now you are doing, the unfolding the heinous nature of that crime you now implead us as guilty of before God. To this we answer,

(1.) Should we grant what is alleged as to your innocency in this matter, to be true, yet herein there is much of the nature of your sin to be seen, since it partakes of the common nature of sin, with that of the murder of God; and since it is every way equal to, if not that very same, against which God did evidence his hatred in so wonderful a manner, in the death of his only begotten Son, whom he spared not, but gave to the death, when he laid on him the iniquity of the elect world." But,

(2.) We say, that very sin lies at your door, O sinners! and if you deny it, I would only ask you one question. Dare you hold up your faces, and in the sight of God say, that you did receive Jesus Christ the first time ever there was an offer of him made to you? If not, then you are guilty in that you practically say, that the putting him to death was no crime. You by your practice bear witness to, or assert the justice of the Jews' quarrel, and bring the blood of God upon your head: and therefore in their crimes you may see your own. All the world, to whom the gospel-report comes, must either be for or against the Jews in their prosecution of him; and no otherwise can we give testimony against them, but by believing the gospel report of him, that he was indeed the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. In so far as we refuse a compliance with this, in as far are we guilty of the death of Christ: for unbelief subscribes the Jews' charge against the Son of God, and asserts him an impostor.

(3.) Either you are believers or unbelievers; if believers, then it was for your very sins that Christ was killed, it was for your iniquities he was bruised: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like lost sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," saith the prophet in the name of all the elect, Isaiah liii. 5, 6. If you be unbelievers, then you do not believe the witness that Christ gave of himself, that he is the Son of God; and therefore do practically declare him an impostor, and worthy of death, and so may say of yourselves with respect to the Jews' cruelty, that when they condemned him, they had your consent to what they did.

Now, what think ye, O criminals! when we have, in these eight different glasses, given you a prospect of the crime we implead you of? Is it not a fearful one? If you be not strangely stupified, sure you must own it so. But lest there should be any so blind, as not to discern what it is we accuse them of, we shall,

2dly. Proceed to mention some great evils that are all implied in the least sin, in every provocation. This charge which we intend against you is no mean thing. For,

1. It has atheism in it. An atheist, who denies the being of a God, is a monster in nature; a creature so extremely degenerate, that some have doubted, whether there ever was, or could be, any of the sons of Adam so debauched as in principle to avouch this monstrous untruth. But there are practical atheists, such as the apostle mentions and characterises, Tit. i. 16. "who profess to know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient;" or, as it is in the language, "Children of unpersuasion, or unpersuadable, and to every good work reprobate." That there are such, none can deny, since every sinner is in some sort such, for every sin has atheism in it. In the 14th and 53d Psalms, we have a description of the natural state of man; and look to the spring of all the impieties, ver. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" and then a train of lamentable practical impieties follow: "they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." The Psalmist doth not there discourse of some profligate wretches among the Jews, or of the Gentiles who knew not God, but of the whole race of Adam, Jew and Gentile, as the apostle proves, in the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses of this chapter, wherein our text lies, when he adduces testimonies from this psalm, to prove all and every one to have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And indeed the thing proves itself. What! do not we deny his sovereignty, when we violate his laws? Do not we deny and disgrace his holiness, when we cast our filth before his face? And we disparage his wisdom, when we set up our own will as the rule and guide of our actions. We deny his sufficiency, when we profess that we find more in sin, or in the creature, than in him. In fine, every sin is a denial of all God's attributes, one way or other; and therefore every sin has atheism in it: so that our charge against you runs very high, it amounts to no less than an impeachment for atheism: A crime, than which there is not, nor indeed can there be, any more odious: for all other distempers naturally fall in here; they all issue themselves into this infection: and hence is it that the atheist is generally so odious and hateful; and yet even they who hate the atheist most, want not atheism; and they who will be most forward to question this truth, that all sinners are guilty of atheism, are, it is most like, most guilty. This, then, is one branch of the charge laid against you; but it is not all. For,

2. We charge you all with idolatry. Simmers you are, and every sin hath idolatry in it. How can this be? will you say; we never worshipped an idol all our life, we never bowed at the name of a strange god: we bless God we were better taught than so; we were not bred Papists nor Pagans, but reformed Christians, who renounce all idols, and plead the worship of one God alone. Well, notwithstanding of all this, idolaters you are. What! do you think that only the mere gross act of

idolatry is reputed such by the holy God? This certainly flows from your ignorance of him, and of his law. Did you understand either, you would never attempt your own justification. There is not only outward and gross idolatry, but there is a more secret and inward sort of it. A set of men there were with whom the prophet Ezekiel had to do, who were as formal and punctual in their attendance upon duties, I mean the external duties of religion, as you are: externally in covenant with God they were, as you are: nor is it improbable that they had now abandoned all external idolatry; for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, in the time of which Ezekiel lived, never more followed idols as before. And yet hear the message these men have sent to them by the prophet, in the 14th chapter of his prophecies, "Son of man," says God to him, "these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face;" and so he proceeds in the sequel of the chapter, from the 3d verse and downwards, to threaten them with grievous and terrible punishments. Every one that sets up any thing in that room in his heart which is God's due, is an idolater; for idolatry is the transferring that love, esteem, confidence, trust, fear, reverence, or obedience, which is due to God, on any creature. Now, who is not guilty of this, when he serves sin? doth he not obey either his own will, or the devil, in opposition to the command of God, and thereby substitute either himself or Satan into God's room? Think. O think! upon this part of your charge, and tremble! But to proceed.

3. Every sin has blasphemy in it; it reproaches God. They are not only the blasphemers, who in reproachful speeches belch out against Heaven, and as the Psalmist expresses it, Psal. lxxiii. 10. "Set their mouth against the heaven, and with their tongue walk through the earth," sparing neither God nor man; but these also are blasphemers, who do in their actions reproach God, Numb. xv. 30, 31. "The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandments; that soul shall be utterly cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him." Is it a small thing to you, O sinners, that you have broken the command of God? It may be light and easy in your eyes, but see to it, whether God's word or yours shall stand. You call it a light thing; but God looks upon himself as reproached by it: and indeed he justly looks upon it as a reproach; for every sin charges him, (1.) With folly. God, in giving laws to men to walk by, designed the manifestation of his wisdom, in making such laws as became the infinite wisdom of the Supreme Governor of the world; but the sinner by every sin says practically, that God's laws are not wise: his own will, which he follows in the commission of sin, he thinks better. (2.) It reproaches his goodness. The sinner says, by his practice, that neither God's laws nor himself are good, but that God has, either through ignorance, or folly, or malice, retrenched him of what might have conduced to his good; that his laws are not calculated to the advantage and real good of his subjects. (3.) He hereby likewise reproaches the righteousness and holiness of God, in as far as these are stamped upon the law, which he not only rejects, but tramples upon, as one that "believes not God calls him a liar." 1 John v. 10. So he that obeys him not, accuses him either of unrighteousness or folly. Now, this

branch of the charge rises higher than avowed atheism; for the atheist entirely disowns God, and so entertains not such unsuitable thoughts of him as he doth who owns him, and yet accuses him, by his practice, of ignorance, folly, and impurity. But this is not all that is in the crime laid against you. For,

4. Every sin hath robbery in it. It is a rape committed, an endeavour to carry away some one or other of the crown jewels of heaven. God has said, "He will not give his glory to another;" and one darling part of this glory is that of his absolute dominion. Now, every sinner endeavours to rob God of this, and that to clothe either Satan or sin with it. The commanding power it would have taken from God, and given to itself, or some other, than which there can be no greater robbery. Again, the glory of God's sovereignty is due to him, in a punctual obedience to every one of his commands. He that obeys the command, gives God the glory of his authority, and owns him governor of the world; and this is a part of God's property; it is the revenue that he requires of the world; and the sinner, by every sin he commits, attempts to rob him of this glory, invades his property. We find God himself managing the charge of robbery against a people called by his name, Mal. iii. 8, 9. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me: but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." So I say to you, You have robbed God: but you will say, Wherein have we robbed him? I answer, In that which is far more valuable than "tithes and offerings;" you have robbed him, and in every sin do rob him, of that obedience which to him "is better than sacrifice." "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," 1 Sam. xv. 22. But this is not all; we charge you,

5. With rebellion. Every sinner is a rebel against God; he casts off the yoke of God, bursts the bonds of obedience, and takes up rebellious arms against God, the great sovereign of the world. Rebellion is a thing so odious, that the unjust imputation of it has been made frequently, like the wild beasts' skins with which some primitive persecutors clothed the saints of the Most High, that thereby they might set upon them the dogs to tear them. Men have been termed rebels, and had this note of infamy put upon them, for disobeying the unlawful and impious commands of men, while disobedience to the commands of God has got a more mild and favourable name: while duty has been called rebellion; the highest acts of rebellion against the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, such as drunkenness, swearing, persecution, have been horribly miscalled by the appropriation of soft names; the drunkard has been called a good fellow, the swearer a gentleman, and the persecutor a loyalist. But God will take care to have these abuses rectified, and to have things called by their right names, and then sin, and only sin, will be found to be rebellion: and this we charge upon you. And that we have ground to assert every sin rebellion, you may soon see, if you consider, that, 1 Sam. xii. 14, 15. "If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye, and also the King that reigneth over you, continue fol-

lowing the Lord your God. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers." Thus you see, obeying and not rebelling, disobeying and rebelling, are plainly the same thing in God's account; God uses them so; if you obey and rebel not, if you disobey and rebel. This then is one branch of the charge we now manage against you. In God's name we accuse you of rebellion, when we accuse you of sin; for, as you have just now heard, rebellion and sin is in scripture-account, and therefore in God's account, one and the same; and how heinous this crime is, we find the Spirit of God telling us, in that 1 Sam. xv. 23. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." Once more,

6. We charge murder upon you. A hard charge, will you say, if it be well proven; a charge which, if it be made good against us, we deserve by the law of God and man to die. Well, as difficult as you may think it, we shall make it good against every soul of you, and that after this manner. You have sinned, and every sinner is a murderer, and that the worst of murderers. Well might the wise man say, Eccl. ix. 18. "One sinner destroyeth much good." For, (1.) He murders his own soul by it. What is said of adultery is indeed applicable to every sin, Prov. xvi. 32. "He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul," and so is guilty of that worst of wickedness, self-murder. He slays a soul, and not a body only, who commits sin. (2.) He is in disposition a murderer of God, who commits sin. This is plain, if you consider two scriptures: 1 John iii. 5. it is asserted, that hatred is murder, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life." And Rom. viii. 7. it is said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." So that the natural man, in the state wherein he is born, is a hater, an enemy of God, and therefore, in God's account, a murderer of God; for indeed he that hates one, forbears murdering only for want either of opportunity, or power, or secrecy, or some such like advantage. Now, every sin is the product of that natural enmity, the fruit of which grows on the carnal mind; and therefore must partake of the nature of the root, must have enmity or hatred against God in it, and implies a judging him unworthy of a being. That principle of enmity which inclines and prompts man to sin, to tread upon God's law, would excite him to destroy God, were it possible; every sin aims at no less than the life of God. We say not that every or any sinner doth intend the destruction of God, but that it is the aim of every sin. A man, in every sin, aims at the advancement of his own will above that of God's; and, could the sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed; for God cannot survive his will. He can as soon outlive his being as his glory; and he that aims at the one, aims at the other also: and this is the case of every sinner. Now, I have made it good, that every sin has murder in it; and consequently that all who have sinned, as ye all have done, have committed murder, and that of the worst sort, self-murder, soul-murder, nay, and God-murder: and if the blood of the body of another shall be required at the hand that sheds it, what do you think will be the case of such as have shed the blood of a soul? And if it stand hard with such, what will become of the murder of God? Sure, if simple murder be avenged seven times more; and if soul-murder be so evil,

and bring complicated destruction upon the guilty, what, O sinners! think ye, will be the case of those who shall be found conspirators against the life of God?

Now, can ye think the crime alleged against you small, after we have a little opened it to you? sure he who will, must be totally destitute of all sense of God, or of religion, nay, or reason. What is grievous and heavy, if the charge of atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder, be not so? And we have made it appear, that our plea, or rather God's plea against you, amounts to no less. But this is far from being all that we have to say in the justification of God, and for your condemnation. These sins have,

Sdly, Aggravations as dreadful and guilt-enhancing, as they themselves are great and monstrous. You have sinned, and consequently are guilty of atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder; but not simply of these abominations as in themselves, but as they are attended with a great many fearful and killing aggravations, which add extremely to the score of the provocations, being as it were so many cyphers put behind the figures, which, though in themselves they be nothing, yet put behind, they swell the number to a prodigious greatness.

1. All these evils you have done, notwithstanding a great many notable helps you received against sin. Not to speak of what you had in Adam, perfect strength, perfect will, and perfect happiness, you have not only sinned in him against all these, but you who are here present have sinned against many notable means afforded you of God for your preservation from sin. (1.) You have sinned in the face of all the dreadful threatenings of God's vengeance against it. You have sinned under the very thunderings of Mount Sinai: and when the flames of hell have, out of the threatenings of God, been staring you in the face, even then you have dared to provoke the Most High, slighting all these formidable evidences of his anger. (2.) You have sinned against dreadful examples or instances of the judgments of God against offenders. You have, as it were, seen your companions turned into hell, and yet you have persisted in the crimes for which they were served so. Say now, who of you, in some one remarkable instance or other, has not seen the judgments of God against sin and sinners? Sure our land has of late afforded remarkable instances not a few. Have you not seen some, out of a fever of lust, fall into sickness, and out of this drop into the bottomless abyss of the scorching wrath of God? and, notwithstanding all this, you have sinned on, and have not guarded against sin. (3.) You have sinned contrary to great and precious gospel-promises; these great and precious promises, that are breasts full of light, full of life, consolation, and strength, full of spiritual supplies for strengthening poor men against the assaults of sin. (4.) You have sinned against the glorious gospel-ordinances, all of which are designed for the destruction and ruin of sin, and are the pipes through which the supplies contained in the promises are conveyed to the Lord's people. (5.) You have sinned against all the strivings of the Spirit of God with you, in ordinances and providences; and consequently have resisted the Holy Ghost in your sins. (6.) You have sinned against that sovereign ordinance of God, the antitype of the brazen serpent, Jesus Christ, who is lifted up for that very end, that he may save his people from their sins;

and bids all the ends of the earth look unto him for that end, Is. xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The God who has been holding him forth to you, who has provided you, in all the great and notable advantages, is the God you have sinned against, whom you have rebelled against, and treated unworthily in these horrid violations of his law, which we have enumerated to you above. But this is not the only aggravations of your sins, that you had helps against sin : But,

2. You have sinned against the God of your mercies, the God who has loaded you with his favours. O sad requital you have given to God for all the kindnesses he has done to you, since the morning of the day ! May he not justly, nay, may we not in his name, lay that to your charge, which we find him with wonderful solemnity charging upon his people. Isa. i. 2. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth ; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Have not you been nourished and brought up under the care, and by the providence of God ? and has he not met with the same entertainment at your hand ? Now, this is a dreadful aggravation of your guilt. For, (1.) It is not one mercy, or two, but innumerable mercies, innumerable kindnesses. Reckon, O sinners ! what the mercies of God are, if ye can. Nay, if ye can count the stars in the heaven, or the sand of the sea shore, you may. David says in that 71st Psalm, "That he knows not the number of God's salvation ;" and who may not say with him in this ? God every day preserves you from many thousands of inconveniences that would destroy you, and bestows upon you many thousands of mercies. He loads you with his benefits, and ye load yourselves with your sins against him. Ye turn the point of them all, as it were, against God, and make these very mercies, he gives you, weapons of unrighteousness to fight against him. As his favours, so your sins are more than the hairs of your head. Look round you, whatever you see, whatever you enjoy, clothes, food, or whatever contributes to the comfort of life, that you have from him ; and this is the God, O sinners ! against whom ye have sinned, who treats you thus, "in whom ye live, move, and have your being," as the apostle observes, Acts xvii. 28. (2.) As the mercies are many against which ye have sinned, so they are great. If any can be called so, these which you have at the hand of God may. What is great, if all that is needful for life and godliness be not ? And no less does the provision that God has made amount unto ; and no less has the Lord God given unto you. Has not "his divine power given to you all things that pertain to life and godliness ?" 2 Pet. i. 3. Have not ye a gospel-dispensation, food and raiment ? And what more is needful ? And yet against those great mercies you have sinned. When God has fed you to the full, Jeshurun-like, you have waxed fat, and kicked against the God that has fed you all your life long, Deut. xxxii. 15. (3.) Ye have sinned notwithstanding of a long tract of these many and great undeserved kindnesses ; and this extremely enhances your guilt. What ! would he not be looked on as a very monster in nature, who would kill the man that was putting the meat in his mouth ? who would watch opportunities against one who had done him wonderful kindness ? and this is exactly your case ; you have sinned, and that against the God of your mercies. And therefore,

(4.) Your sins are all acts of monstrous ingratitude, than which nothing worse can be laid to the charge of any man. It is a sin that makes a man worse than the beast of the field: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Isa. i. 3. The dullest of beasts know who do them kindnesses, and fawn, as it were, upon those that feed them ordinarily: but ye, O sinners! have kicked and lift up the heel against the God that has fed you all your life long, and so are guilty of the most horrid ingratitude. And do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise! But this is not all that may be said for aggravating your wickedness in sinning against God. For,

3. You have done all this wickedness without any provocation. When subjects rebel against their sovereign, they have usually some shadow of excuse for the taking up arms against him; but ye have none. What have ye to allege in your own defence, O criminals? What iniquity, what fault have ye found in God, that ye have gone backward and forsaken his ways? "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob," Isa. xli. 21. What have ye to offer in your justification? Sure I am, the ordinary pretences which are upon such occasions made use of, to justify a subtraction of obedience from the kings of the earth, will do you no service. (1.) You cannot, you dare not quarrel God's claim to the sovereignty of the world. What will, what can make it his due, if creation, preservation, benefits, and the supereminent excellencies of his nature, qualifying him as it were for so great a post, do not give a just claim? And God has a right to the government of the world upon all these accounts. He made us, and not we ourselves: he is the mighty preserver of man; he loads us daily with his benefits: and there is none like him to be his competitor. (2.) You cannot allege unjust laws. You cannot say that he has overstretched his prerogative, and withholden any part of that which was your unquestionable due. No. Who dare implead the Most High of injustice? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Are not his laws most just always? and his judgments most righteous? Is he not a God of truth, and without iniquity? Sure he is. We boldly bid you a defiance to discover any thing unjust in that body of laws which God has given to the sons of men. Nor, (3.) Can ye allege the rigour of his laws, that he is an austere one, and has gone to the utmost he might with you, exacting all that he possibly could. No; he has consulted your good in the frame of his laws, and has contrived them so, that every one who understands what he says, must own, that had mankind been at the making of them, they could not, by all their joint wit, have gone near to make them so exactly answer the design of the high God, his glory in the good of the creature, as he has done.

4. Nay, further, your sins have this aggravation, that they are committed without any prospect of advantage, to countervail the damage you sustain. Could ye pretend, that you can by your disobedience gain some great thing, if it did not excuse you, it would make you to be pitied, as being overborne by a very great temptation. But this cannot, dare not be alleged: no; you "spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which doth not profit." You can make no hand of it. You offend the God of your mercies without any

provocation, and that for a very trifle. He has not stood with you upon the greatest, and ye scruple the least points with him; yea, for a trifle of pleasure, ye stand not to offend him. Nay.

5. You sin, notwithstanding the interposition of the most solemn vows to the contrary; and therefore we might have made this one of the ingredients of sin, perjury. All of you who are now before the Lord, stand solemnly engaged to fear, and obey, and serve the Lord, all the days of your lives. When you were offered to God in baptism, then you came under the vows of God; and when you have given your presence in the public assemblies of God's people, since you came to age, ye have solemnly owned and ratified these vows; and yet notwithstanding all these you have sinned against God, even your covenanted God; and therefore there is perjury in all your sins. You have despised the oath in breaking the covenant of your God.

6. When you have sinned, and continue to sin against God, yet ye continue to profess fealty and subjection to him, and thereby add fearful hypocrisy and mockery to your wickedness; like that profane people with whom the prophet Malachi had to do, who dealt traitorously with God, wearied him by ~~his~~ wickedness, robbed him of his due, and yet asserted their own innocency in all; and this, throughout the whole of that book, is charged upon them as an aggravation of their guilt. Their profession they still kept up, and challenged God to show wherein they had failed of their duty. Now, this is much your case; your very appearance here carries in it such a challenge. Would ye come here without scruple, and so boldly rush into God's presence, whom ye have offended, were ye not at this with it, that ye judge God either knows not, or will not be offended with what ye have done.

Now, you have heard your charge opened. It is not, as we have said before, some petty misdemeanor that is libelled against you, but crimes as black as hell, atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder, and that against the God of your mercies, over the belly of a great many notable preventing means of grace, in spite of the most solemn vows to the contrary, without any shadow of provocation, any prospect of real advantage; and all this, notwithstanding a great many professions to the contrary.

Here is the sum and substance of your indictment, enough to make heaven and earth astonished, that God does not in fury fall upon us, and make an utter end of us. If every one saw his own concernment in this matter, how would we be affected? it would make a strange work in this house.

This, O sinners! is your charge: what have ye to answer to it? Plead ye guilty or not? Sure I am, every soul in this house may say with Job in that 9th chapter of his book and 20th verse, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." If you plead guilty, and take with the charge, what means this security we see among you? "Is it not a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" Is it an easy thing to suffer the punishment due to such crimes. Sure none can say it is.

But it may be, some of you may be ready to say, indeed we cannot deny ourselves to be sinners. God help us; for we have all sinned; but indeed we never thought, nor can we yet think, that every sin hath in

all these monstrous evils you have mentioned. God forbid we were all of us atheists, idolaters, blasphemers, robbers, murderers, and perjured rebels, as you have made us. No : we have indeed sinned, but our consciences did never accuse us of any such monstrous impieties as these are. To those who shall dare to say, or think so, we answer. (1) We do indeed believe, that many of your consciences did never accuse you of any such crimes. Many of you keep the eyes of conscience fast shut in ignorance. You fear to bring your deeds to the light of a well-informed conscience, lest they should be reprov'd. Others of you have sinned your consciences asleep, or rather you have abused them, so that they are either faint, that they cannot speak loud, or stupified, that they cannot speak at all. But all this will not prove your innocence as to the crimes alleged. Wherefore, (2.) Who has the juster estimate of sin, God or you? Who knows best what malignity, what evil there is in its nature? Surely God knows best what the honour of his own laws and authority is, and how far it is trampled upon by every sin. We are but of yesterday, and know nothing. (3.) Whose word, think ye, will stand, God's or yours? God has by his word represented no less to be in it, than we have said to be in it, and therefore there is no less in it. God will reckon so, and deal with you not according to the judgment ye make of sin, but that which he makes. We have made it appear, from the word of God, that sin is such as we have represented it; and if ye think more mildly of it, be doing, and behold the issue.

Having thus opened to you your indictment, I shall now proceed,

SECONDLY, to lead witnesses against you to prove the charge, according to the method we laid down for the management of this business, in our entry upon the improvement.

But before we begin this work, we shall briefly obviate a difficulty that may be started against the whole of what we are to say under this head. To what purpose is it, may some say, to lead witnesses to prove a charge which is confessed? Who denies this, that they are sinners? every one will readily own so much: and therefore any thing that is said to prove such a thing seems perfectly lost. To this shortly we say, (1.) Though every body acknowledges that they are guilty, yet few, very few, believe to be true what they themselves are ready to say in this matter. We all own ourselves guilty of sin; but were it believed, would not every eye be full of tears? every heart full of fears? Would not our knees, Belshazzar-like, beat one against another, every face gather paleness, and every mouth be full of that inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Sure they would; and that it is not so, is a clear and unquestionable proof that we do not really believe what we say. (2.) Were our only design to justify God in any measure he has taken, or may take, to punish us, then indeed such an acknowledgment were sufficient to found a sentence of condemnation on, and to free God from any imputation of injustice in punishing them who acknowledge the crime; but our design is of another sort; we are to study to bring you to such a sense of your sin, as may put you to inquire for a relief. And therefore, (3.) We are to use all methods which may in any measure contribute to the furtherance of this design; we are to essay all ways to awaken you out of that security wherein you are like to sleep on, till you be entirely ruined, till there be no remedy or relief for you.

This prejudice being taken out of the way, we shall now proceed to lead the witnesses against you. We have laid the blackest of crimes to your charge, and we have the strongest evidence that you are guilty: for we can prove guilt upon you by witnesses, which may be compared with any, either as to capacity or integrity; witnesses who are faithful in this matter, and will not lie, according to the character given by the wise man, Prov. xiv. 5. "A faithful witness will not lie." Witnesses they are who cannot be suspected of partial counsel, who never would have advised you to sin, and who take no pleasure in accusing you; and therefore cannot be suspected of malice, or of any ill or invidious design against you, as were easy to make appear of every one of them whom we shall name.

Take heed, therefore, we beseech you, to their testimony. The gravity and consequence of the matter, the quality of the witnesses, being the greatest in heaven or earth, and your concernment in the whole, do join in pleading for your attention. O criminals! as your crimes are great, so is the evidence we bring against you great. For,

1st, The Lord is witness against you. As he said of old to his people, in Jer. xxix. 23. so he says to you, Young and old of you, who are here present, you have sinned: "Even I know and am a witness, saith the Lord." God, who cannot lie, accuses you as guilty of sin: "And if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us," 1 John i. 10. Here is a witness against you, O sinners! to whose charge, I am sure, you have nothing to lay. Malice he purges himself of, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Could it be any pleasure to him to ruin the work of his own hands? No sure.

2dly, Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, the Amen and Faithful Witness, gives in evidence against you.—He came to bear witness to the truth; and this was one of the great truths to which he bare witness, That all have sinned, and therefore are under a sentence of condemnation, which can no otherwise be repealed, but by believing on the name of the only-begotten Son of God, John iii. 18. "He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Christ's very name bears witness to this truth. He is called "Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Matth. i. 21.—And how could he save them from their sins, had they none?

3dly, Guilty you are, for the Spirit of truth, John xiv. 17. calls you so. It is one of the offices of this glorious person of the ever-blessed Trinity, to convince the world of sin, John xvi. 8. "And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin." If this glorious witness would now speak, as sometimes he has done, we should then need no more witnesses. He would finish the evidence, and make it answer our design. Thus we see, that there are three in heaven that bear record, and set to their seal to this great truth, the Father, Son, and Spirit. Now, sure we cannot refuse what they bear testimony to. Any crime, however great, is sufficiently proven by the concurring testimonies of two men; and, "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," 1 John v. 9. But,

4thly, God's deputy in your bosoms is a witness of this great but sad truth, that ye have all sinned. Ye are witnesses against yourselves, and have actually given testimony against yourselves in this matter: and that (1.) In your baptism. When you were baptized, you did then own yourselves guilty; for as "the whole need not the physician, but the sick," so the clean need not washing, but the defiled; and he who washes owns himself defiled. (2.) Your attendance on gospel-ordinances is a testimony to this truth, that you have sinned; for they all level at the salvation of sinners. (3.) The very name whereby you are called, is a testimony given to this truth. Christians you are called; and if any body should deny you to be so, you would take it very highly amiss, and look upon it as a notable indignity done you. Well, if ye be Christians, that is, the people of Christ, then you are sinners; for he came to "save his people from their sins," Matth. i. 21. (4.) Is there any among you that ever prayed for pardon of sin? Sure, those who have not done so, deserve not the name of Christians; and those who have done so, whether young or old, rich or poor, have borne witness against themselves in this matter. And there is one day, when your consciences, that may now either be silent, or obliged to speak so low that it can scarce well be heard, shall not only speak to make you hear it, but force you to speak this sad truth, so that others may hear it distinctly. But further,

5thly, The scriptures bear witness against you, that you have sinned. This is every where their voice. The book of God is full of this certain and sad truth. Look but forward to the 10th verse of this chapter, and there you shall see a cloud of testimonies to this purpose. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no, not one." Among all the race of Adam, the Scriptures of truth make not one exception; and therefore ye are all guilty; for "the scripture cannot be broken," John x. 35.

6thly, The ministers of the gospel bear witness against you, that you have sinned. This is our work, to be witnesses to the truths of God, of which this is one, that all have sinned; and to this truth we give testimony. (1.) In that the very design of our office proclaims this truth, and asserts the undoubted certainty of it. What the design of our office is, the apostle in that 1 Tim. iv. 16, shortly tells us, it is to save ourselves and them who hear us. We, and ye who hear us, are sinners, because we need to be saved. An office set up for the saving of souls is a standing testimony and witness to the truth, that all have sinned; and when a minister comes to any congregation, then it is one part of his business to bear witness for God, that all of them have sinned. (2.) We give a testimony to this great truth, that ye have sinned, in as far as we do proclaim to you, in God's name, and by the warrant of his word, that ye have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God. (3.) We give a testimony to this great truth when we preach Christ to you; for the whole gospel-revelation goes upon this supposition, that all have sinned. When we offer you a Saviour, we assert that you are lost; when we press you to employ a physician, we assert that you are sick; when, in Christ's stead, we entreat and beseech you

to be reconciled to God, we declare you are enemies. In fine, when we proclaim to you remission of sins, we clearly give testimony against you, that ye are sinners, who stand in need of pardon. (4.) The issue of our work will prove you all sinners. One of two will infallibly be the issue of our work among you; either we will obtain your consent to the blessed gospel-contrivance for the salvation of sinners, or we shall have a refusal given us; and whatsoever way it go, we shall in the issue give in a testimony to this truth: if we obtain a favourable answer, then we must bear testimony, that you did receive Christ our Lord upon his own terms, and therefore were sinners; if you reject the counsel of God against yourselves, then we must bear witness, that you are guilty of the greatest sin which any of the sons of Adam can be guilty of, unbelief; which makes God a liar, as the apostle John has it, 1 John v. 10 "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son: and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Moreover,

7thly, The whole creation asserts this truth, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: and consequently that part of it which ye use, asserts no less of you in particular. The apostle, Rom. viii. 22. tells us, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." These creatures you daily use, they groan. If your ears were not deafened by sin you might hear the groans of the ground you tread upon, of the food ye eat, and of the raiment ye put on. Well, what is the matter? what occasions these groans? The apostle tells us, in the 20th and 21st verse of that chapter, it is made subject to vanity, and to the bondage of corruption; "for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Here the apostle asserts, (1.) That "the creature is made subject to vanity;" that is, is liable to be abused by men, to other ends than it was first designed for: it is subject to this vanity, of falling short of the design of its creation, which was the glory of God, and of being abused to his dishonour through the corruption of man. (2.) He asserts, that it was not willingly made subject to it. O shame! the brute creatures condemn man. Man was willingly subject to vanity, did willingly desist from the prosecution of that which was the design of his creation. The rest of the creatures are passive in it; it is a sort of force put upon them. It is a violence done to the creatures, when they are so abused to the service of sin: it is contrary to their very natures; for they still continue according to the laws which God set them in the beginning. (3.) The only thing that makes them continue in being, when they are so abused by man, is the appointment of God. He continues them in being, not for this end, to be abused to a subserviency to the lusts of men, though they make this use of the goodness of God; but that, by the continued effects of it, and proofs of undeserved kindness, he may lead them to repentance. (4.) The apostle asserts, that the creation shall be a sharer with the sons of God, in their glorious delivery from the bondage of corruption, that is, when the children of God, these who have received Christ, and by his power to become the sons of God,

shall be fully freed from the remainders of the guilt, power, and pollution of sin, then the creature shall no more be used contrary to God's design in its creation, but shall, in the hand of the rational creature, again become an instrument for showing forth the glory of God, as it was at first designed to be. And to show the condition of the creature requires this, (5.) He in the 22d verse asserts, that the whole creation groaneth, that is, complains of its hard usage, of its being abused by men's sin, and he extends this to the whole creation, that there may be no access for any who use the creatures to free themselves of that which the complaint runs against, to wit, sin. How can any free himself of sin, while all his enjoyments witness against him, that he has sinned. O sinners! the sun that shines upon you groans, that it must give light to a sinner, one who uses the light for an encouragement to sin against God. The ground you tread upon groans with the weight of sinners. The food that feeds you complains, that it must be so horribly perverted as to serve the lusts of a sinner, as to furnish one with strength to sin against God. See Hab. ii. 11. James v. 3.

Stily, The judgments of God bear witness against you. As many rods as have ever been upon you, as many witnesses are there of this sad truth. The rod of God speaks; for we are commanded to hear the rod, Micah vi. 9. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." Every stroke that the hand of God lays upon us speaks; and the first thing it says, is, Ye have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. For affliction doth not spring out of the ground, nor doth trouble arise out of the dust. And here we may boldly, with Eliphaz, Job iv. 7. challenge you to give one instance of any innocent who ever suffered the least wrong or trouble. "Remember, I pray thee," says he to Job, "who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" as if he had said, Search the records of ancient times; rub up thy memory, and give me but one instance of any person who suffered, and was not a sinner. I defy thee to give me one instance. Indeed he was out in the application of that unquestionable truth: for he did thence endeavour to infer that Job was a hypocrite. As to the application we are not concerned in it; but for the truth itself, that we own, and challenge you to instance any. Our blessed Lord indeed was free of personal failings, but not so of imputed ones; for the Lord "laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he was wounded for our transgressions." And therefore his sufferings are noways inconsistent with this truth, that none suffer but sinners; and therefore your sufferings are a proof, and do testify that ye have sinned; for God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," Lam. iii. 33. He takes no pleasure in afflicting his own creatures; but when he does it, it is for their sins. What God in his sovereignty may do, as to the punishing, or rather afflicting of an innocent creature, we shall not determine. Learned men have learnedly, I may say, played the fool, or trifled in debating on this point, the determination whereof makes nothing to edification, were it possible to determine it satisfiingly. If any should ask me, Can God punish or afflict an innocent creature? I would answer, (1.) That questions about what God can do are dangerous, and may for most part be forborne. (2.) Punish an innocent creature he cannot, for that presup-

poseth a fault. (3.) God in the first formation of his creatures, did set them such a law for their rule, as did lead them directly to the highest perfection their natures were capable of: and they walking according to that rule, *i. e.* being innocent, it is hard to conceive how they could fall short, or in any measure swerve from the end. If it be still inquired, Whether God may not in his absolute sovereignty, pass over this, which seems to be the fixed and settled order of his conduct towards the creatures, and afflict them, or to suffer them to meet with inconveniences, while they hold close to the rule that God has set them? If I say, any state the question thus: Then, (4.) I shall only propose another question to the inquirer, Can there possibly fall within the compass of God's knowledge, a design which will make it worthy of his infinite wisdom and goodness to do so, to break this law of nature, which is every way suited to his wisdom and goodness? If he say, there may, then he is obliged to produce it, which he will find hard enough to do: if he say not, then he determines the question in the negative, but dangerously enough: for who knows the infinitely wise designs which may fall within the compass of the thoughts of the omniscient God, whose ways and thoughts are as far above the thoughts of man, as the heavens are above the earth? But whatever be in this nice debate, wherein we shall not inmix ourselves, the truth we have advanced is certain, that no instance can be given wherein God has afflicted those who have been absolutely free from sin, inherent or imputed: and therefore the rods of God are witnesses against you, that you have sinned. Speak, O sinners! did you never meet with an affliction in body or mind, in your persons or families, in yourselves or in your relations, young or old? Who, or where is the man or woman that never had a cross? I believe that person is scarce to be found in the world who hath no complaints, that is, who hath no crosses. Well then, as many crosses as ye have had, as many witnesses are there in giving in testimony against you, that ye have sinned. For no sinning, no suffering.

9thly, In fine, to name no more witnesses Death, the king of terrors, is a witness against you, and gives testimony against all, that they have sinned: for "the wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. It is only sin that gives death a power over you. If any of you can plead exemption from death, then you may with some reason plead freedom from the charge we have laid against you; but if not, then in vain will all pretences, shifts, and evasions be. It may be, now we shall not, no not by the testimony of all the famous witnesses we have led against you, bring you to a conviction of sin: but when Death, the king of terrors, begins his evidence, he will convince you ere he has done with you; for he will send you where ye shall be convinced not much to your comfort. Death is a serjeant to the great King; and when he takes you, arrests you, cites you anon to appear before the bar that is in the higher house, how will your hearts fail you then? O sinners! the sight of the grim messenger Death, of the executioner Satan, of the place of torment hell, and the awful solemnity of the Judge of the quick and the dead, will supersede any further proof, and will awaken the most sleepy conscience, which will then be, not only witness, but judge, and even executioner, to those who should not be able to plead an interest in Christ Jesus, who have never been convicted soundly of sin at the bar of the word.

Thus we have made good our charge against all and every one of you, by the testimony of a great many witnesses of unquestionable credit. It is therefore high time, O sinners! for you to bethink yourselves what ye shall answer when ye are reprov'd.

Hitherto we have held in the general: we have charg'd sin upon you all, without fixing any particular sin upon any particular sorts of persons. Now we come to that which in the next place, we propos'd in the management of this charge against you; and that is,

THIRDLY, To make good the charge, by dealing particularly with the conscience of several sorts of persons among you, to bring you, if possible, to a sense of your sin.

All who are in this house may be rank'd, according to the apostle John's division, into children, young men, and fathers; or into children, those of a middle age, and old persons. Under young men and women are comprehended all those, whether they have families or not, who are not come to declining years, who are yet in the flower of their strength and vigour. To each of them I would apply myself in a way of conviction, and endeavour to bring them to a sense of sin, and that even of particular sins.

But that I may proceed in this with the more clearness, I shall premise a few things, which may clear the way to what we design upon this head. And,

1st, There are two great designs which every man should continually aim at, usefulness here, and happiness hereafter. We come not into the world, as some foolishly apprehend, to spend or pass our time, and no more of it. No; God has cut us out our work. We are all oblig'd, in some one station or other, to lay out ourselves for the advancement of the glory of God in this world. Every one is furnish'd with endowments more or less. To some God has given an ample stock, many talents; to some fewer; and to some but one. All have received; and if all do not employ their endowments, supposing they appear very inconsiderable, they will find it hard to answer for the misimprovement. He who had but one talent, for his neglect of it had a dreadful doom pronounc'd against him, Matth. xxv. 30. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." We are not born to ourselves only, but to the world, and therefore we should design usefulness in it, and withal should take a due care of our own principal concern, the salvation of our souls. If he who provides not for his own family, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel, 1 Tim. v. 8. what must he be that provides not for his own soul?

2dly, Whatever thoughts, words, or actions, have no usefulness or subserviency to one or other of these ends, are sinful: by the law of God and nature this holds true. If we do, speak or think, any thing that has no tendency to promote either our temporal or eternal happiness, then in so doing we sin against God; we throw away these powers of speaking, thinking and acting, upon that which God never design'd them for; and this is a manifest abuse of a talent bestow'd by God. The Lord complains of Jerusalem's indulging vain thoughts, Jer. iv. 14, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

3dly, Much of our fitness or unfitness for prosecuting these ends, de-

pends upon the right or wrong management of our youth. Idleness, viciousness, and folly, in our childhood has a tendency to incapacitate us in our riper years for prosecuting the designs of our being. Childhood and youth are, as it were, a mould wherein men are cast, and such usually do they continue to be, as they then have been formed; which lets us see how much depends upon the right management of children, of which, the wise man was well aware; as we see Prov. xxii. 6. "Train up a child," says he by the Spirit of God, "in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

4thly, These actions in children which people overlook generally, and judge scarce culpable, yet are upon a double account evil; first in that they flow from a bitter root that cannot bring forth good fruit; I mean that cursed bias and depravity of nature, which prompts to evil, that only, and that continually; and, next, because they have a tendency to incapacitate for the future. An ill habit, contracted when young, cannot soon be worn off: nay, unless grace do interpose, and that with more than ordinary influences, some vicious habits contracted in youth can by no pains or endeavours be laid aside. Had man's nature remained incorrupt, as it was in Adam, then certainly these follies and extravagancies, into which generally childhood and youth are precipitate, had not been known; there should not any of these vicious inclinations have been found, which are now the bane of youth and of childhood.

5thly, We premise this, that the law of God is exceeding broad and extensive, Psal. cxix. 96. "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Some people do strangely, in their deluded apprehensions, narrow the law of God. There is a general mistake here; few, very few, do believe how extensive it is; and therefore most part are clean and pure in their own eyes, though they be not washed from their iniquities. But David, a man according to God's own heart, a man instructed of God in the spiritual meaning of God's law, entertained other thoughts and apprehensions of the matter: he found it exceeding broad and extensive. For, (1.) It extends to words and thoughts, as well as to actions. Many of you do, it may be, dream that if you do no abominably wicked action, though ye live in a course of vain and idle thoughts and words, it is no matter: but deceive not yourselves in this matter, for God judges otherwise: indeed his word has told us, that he will bring every work into judgment, Eccl. xii. 14. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." But he has now here told us, that words and thoughts shall go free. Nay, upon the contrary, he has expressly told us, that we must give an account of idle words, Matth. xii. 36, 37. "But I say unto you, saith the Amen and faithful Witness, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." And in that forecited Jer. iv. 14. the removal of vain thoughts is indispensably required, in order to the salvation of Jerusalem; which says plainly, that an indulged course of them would inevitably ruin it: for, as the Spirit of God tells us, Prov. xxiv. 9. "The thoughts of foolishness is sin." And indeed it is no wonder that they be reputed so by God, the searcher of the hearts, who knows the thoughts afar off; and be condemned by that word that is a discernor of the thoughts of

the heart, since all evil flows from the thought, words and actions being but indications of the thoughts of the heart. And therefore, when Simon Magus is reproved by the apostle Peter, in that 8th of the Acts, for his wicked desire to buy the Holy Ghost, or rather the power of conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands, he is not rebuked for his words, though he spoke it, but for his thoughts, because it was there sin began. Acts viii. 20. "But Peter said to him, thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." (2.) The law of God is broad, in that it extends to all sorts of actions; not only to those which immediately respect God, and those which immediately respect our neighbour or ourselves; but even to our natural actions, eating and drinking, and to our ploughing, or sowing, or the like, which cannot so easily be reduced to any of these other classes: for we are told by the Spirit of God, that "the ploughing of the wicked is sin," Prov. xxi. 4. (3.) The broadness of God's law is conspicuous, in its reaching all sorts of persons, young and old, rich and poor, high and low. All sorts of persons are bound to their duty by the law of God, children as well as others; and a deviation from it is taken notice of, even with respect to children. We are told of their coming into the world in sin, of their being shapen in sin, of their being estranged from the womb, and going astray as soon as born, and of their dying for their sin. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," says the man who made God his trust from his youth up, Psalm li. 5: and in that 58th Psalm we are told, that the wicked go astray in infancy; "The wicked are estranged from the very womb; they go astray as soon as they be born." And the apostle, in that 5th of the Romans, from the 12th verse, proves even infants to be sinners, by their sharing in these calamities which are the consequences of sin: but this could not be, unless the law of God did extend unto and even bind children as well as others. A sense of this extent of the law of God, even to children made blessed Augustine, in that first book of his confessions, cap. 7. bitterly lament and bewail the sins of his childhood, even those which are laughed at by most, such as untowardness, and unwillingness to receive what was good for him; but even in that age, meaning his infancy, does he say, "Was it not ill and sin to seek with tears what would have proven hurtful to me if it had been given? to be angry with those who were nowise obliged to be under my command, because they would not obey me? nay, that even my parents would not obey me. Was it not ill, that I endeavoured to strike even those who were every way my superiors, because they would not obey me in those things wherein they could not have given obedience, without hurt either to me or some other?" Thus we see this holy man looks upon these things as sins, which are commonly laughed at by others as innocent: and if God would give us such a discovery of the wickedness of our natures, and of the extent of the law, as was given to him, then we would think so too. But the truth of this might be proven at great length, were it requisite to say any more than what has already been alleged.

6thly, In speaking to every one of these three sorts of persons, we may have occasion to name many sins; and therefore we shall here at once prove all the particulars we shall name under any of these heads to be sin; because it would divert and detain us too long, to insist under every head, in adducing arguments to prove every one of the particulars we are about to mention to be sinful. Now, that they are all such, ye will not question, if ye carry along, with what has been already said, these three unquestionable scripture-truths: (1.) That whatever is done, thought, or said, by one whose heart is not renewed by grace, is sin. This is the plain meaning of that assertion of our Lord's, Matth. viii. 18. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Hence it is, that not only the thoughts of the wicked, but his ploughing, and his very sacrifice is sin, Prov. xxi. 7. (2.) Whatever respects not the glory of God as its end, is sin, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (3.) Whatever has no respect to Jesus Christ, as the only one in whom our persons or performances can be accepted, is sin, Col. iii. 17. "Whatever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." All the particulars we shall name, will be found cross to one or all of these three, and therefore sinful; though we shall not always particularly insist in proving the sinfulness of every one of them, or in naming the particular commands of the decalogue of which they are a breach.

In the 7th and last place, we premise, That those of a middle age, and of old age, are equally concerned in these sins which we are to lay to the charge of children, with the children themselves, because they were once such. Young men and old men were once children, and therefore guilty of the sins of childhood. Old men were once youths, and therefore guilty of the sins of youth-hood; and therefore ye are all, the oldest of you, obliged to take heed what we say to one or another; because those who are old have been young, and those who are young may be old.

The way being thus cleared, I shall now proceed to speak particularly to, and endeavour the conviction of, the children of the congregation which are now present.

Children and young ones, who are this day hearing me, take heed: I have a message from God to you. That God who made the heavens and the earth, who made you, and who feeds you daily, has sent me this day to you, to every one of you, as particularly as if I did name you, name and surname, to tell you sad and doleful news. The youngest of you all has "sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that is, ye have done that for which God will certainly cast you, soul and body, into hell-fire, if ye get not your peace made with God, through Jesus Christ. You have done that for which God is so angry at you, that his heart will not pity you, his eye will not spare you, unless ye get Christ; but as soon as ever your breath goes out, and none of you can tell how soon that may be, he will, without mercy, turn you into hell, there to be tormented for ever and ever. If ye were not foolish, ye would never play more, nor be merry, till ye got your peace made with God. Now, to let you see that it is true that I tell you, I shall show you what sins ye are guilty of before God.

1. Ye were born sinners, Psal. li. 5. Your parents were all sinners; and as your fathers were, so are ye sinners; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one," says God by the mouth of Job, chap. xiv. 4. When ye came into the world, God might then have sent every one of you to hell, because ye were then all sinners: and though God did not then send you into hell, yet he may do it, and ye cannot tell how soon. If ye take heed, ye may every day hear of some one or other dying, that was, not long before, as likely to live as you are, as young, as healthy as you are; and if God shall now come, and call you away by death, what think you will become of you that are not yet reconciled to God? Ye will all be sent to hell. But,

2. Tell me, I say, did you ever refuse to do what your parents, your fathers, or your mothers have commanded you to do? Do you never remember, that either your fathers, or your mothers, or your master, or, it may be, the minister from the pulpit, has told you, that you should do some things, read, pray, be good scholars, do what your father and mother enjoined you? Well, and have not ye for all that refused to do it? This is a sin against God; and believe it, dear children, there are some, just such as yourselves, burning in hell for disobeying their parents; and though they weep and cry, yet God will never let them out thence.

3. Did never any body reprove you for any thing that ye have done? Did never your father or your mother tell you, that something, it may be swearing, or lying, or forgetting your prayers, was a sin, and would bring you to hell, if ye did not amend? Well, if they did, was not you angry with them? would you not have been glad to get away from them that told you such things? And did not your heart rise against them? Well, this also is a great sin; and if this be not pardoned, God will be sure to turn you into hell for it, Prov. xv. 10. "Correction is grievous to him that forsaketh the way; and he that hateth reproof shall die."

4. Tell me, were you ever desirous to be avenged, or, in your own language, to have amends of some that you thought had done you ill? Were you not vexed, thinking how to get even with them? and would not ye have found in your hearts to have killed them, or to have done them some mischief? Well, this is a grievous sin; for God has forbid us to avenge ourselves, Rom. xii. 19.—

5. Tell me, did ye never give any body ill language? Did ye never miscall your comrades? when you were angry with your neighbour or companion, did ye not use opprobrious or reproaching names? I fear most of you cannot deny it. Well, this again is another sin. Our Lord has said, that whosoever shall call his brother a "fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire," Matth. v. 22.

6. Were you never glad when you could get out, under your father, or mother, or master's eyes, that ye might take your will, and do these things that ye durst not do before them? Now, this is downright atheism? You did not believe that God is every where, otherwise you would not have presumed to do that before him which ye durst not do before your parents. See Psal. xiv. 1. compared with Rom. iii. 10. & 23.

7. Have you not been glad when the Lord's day was over, or at

least when the preaching was done, that ye might get your liberty? Has it not been a burden to you, to sit so long in the church? Well, this is a great sin, which was one of the grounds of God's controversy with his own people, Mal. i. 13. Isa. xliii. 22. Amos viii. 5. It is to be weary of well-doing, against the express command of God, Gal. vi. 9.

8. Tell me, have you not been thinking of other things, when ye have been in church hearing sermon? have you not been thinking of your sport and pastime? or, it may be, speaking to one another in the time of worship? This is another sin whereof you have been guilty; and God counts them mockers of him, who draw near with their lips, when their hearts are far away from him, Isa. xxix. 13.

9. Do you pray to God morning and evening? I fear there shall many be found who neglect this: and tell me, dear children, what do you think will become of those who pray not? God counts them forgetters of him; and he says, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Mal. ix. 17.

10. Do ye lie or swear, and so take God's name in vain? Did you ever swear by the name of God in your ordinary talk? or did ye ever make a lie to excuse or hide a fault? These also are sins; and God has said that liars and swearers shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8.

11. I will only put this one question more to you. Did you never go to your play, when ye should have been at your prayers? Now, take heed; ye know ye have done so. Well, what think ye will be the end of those who do so? Because ye will not seek God, he will not save you; he will reject you, when ye have most need of help.

Now, dear children, I have a great respect to you; fain would I have saved you from hell. It is because I desire your good, that I have been telling you your sins, I shall therefore, before I leave you, (1.) Put some few questions to you for your awakening. (2.) I shall give you a counsel or two. (3.) I shall give you some encouragements to follow the advices given you.

1. Then, I would ask you some few questions; and I beg it of you to take heed how you hear them. And, (1.) Tell me, Did ye ever think of death? If you look at a grave when it is opened, there, instead of one that had life, that could speak, walk, and do all the other things which ye can do; now you see there is nothing but rotten bones, consumed stinking flesh, which the dogs will scarcely come near, and filthy gore. Well, ye will in a little time be just in that case yourselves. Ye must die. No doubt ye have heard of some of your companions, or some other children, who have died; and ye cannot tell but ye may die next. (2.) If you do think of death, what do ye think will become of you, if these sins which ye have done, and of which I have now told you, be not forgiven? Then, without all doubt, you will go to hell. And, O! can you tell what a place hell is? It is a terrible place indeed. It may be, ye would think it a terrible thing if any should put your finger in the hot fire; and indeed it would be so. What then do you think will be the pain which ye shall suffer, when God will cast you, soul and body, into hell-fire: and this will surely be your portion, if ye get not grace. (3.) If once ye be cast into hell, do ye think ever to get out again? I assure you, God has said ye shall not. Though ye weep

till your hearts break, God will not hear you. Ye have done with mercy, if once ye die in your sins. God's eye will not spare; his heart will not pity you. Therefore, if ye would escape hell, I shall tell you,

2. What ye must do, by offering you two or three good counsels. (1.) Whenever ye go home this night, get into some quiet corner or other, and there betake you to God in prayer. Say with the distressed publican, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Say, Lord, thou hast promised a new heart to sinners like me; and I have need of it, for my heart is very bad: and say, Lord, give me Christ; save me from my sins for Christ's sake. Who knows but the Lord, who hears the lions and the ravens when they cry for food, may hear you. (2.) You that can read the Bible or the Catechism, read them; but take care, before ye read, that ye go and pray to God, that he may bless them to you, and make you understand what you read. (3.) Take care that ye never lie, swear or break the Sabbath, or commit again those sins which we were telling you of a little while ago. (4.) Run out of the company of such as do lie, swear, or break the Sabbath: for God will destroy them that keep company with such: "A companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. (5.) Wait on them who will instruct you, and follow the good advices they give you: "Walk with the wise, and ye shall be wise," Prov. xiii. 20. (6.) Be sure that ye pray to God so soon as ye have got on your clothes in the morning, and before ye cast them off at night. Now, if ye will follow these advices, I will,

3. Tell you some things to encourage you in so doing. (1.) God has made a promise, that they who begin soon to seek him shall come speed. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17. (2.) God has a great liking to such as begin to seek him early. He commends them highly; and has left upon record the names of some young converts; such as Abijah, in the house of a wicked Jeroboam, and good Joash, whose early piety is much commended, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the living God of his father David:" and this is left upon record for making others to begin early to seek God. (3.) Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, was willing to entertain, with the most tender affection, little children that were brought unto him; and when his disciples would have them kept away, he rebuked them, and then said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands on them, and blessed them," Mark. x. 14, 16. And I can assure you, he is no less kind now than he was then; for he is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Now, if he was so kind to children that were brought to him, what will he be to those who themselves do come to him? O! if ye knew how good he is, you would never be at rest till you got notice where he is to be found; and then ye would go to him; and I dare promise you welcome. (4.) That I may have done with you, I tell you for your encouragement, that if ye will begin early, and seek God, ye shall be amongst those children of whom the kingdom of heaven is. God will bless you, and all his people will bless you; yea, all generations shall call you blessed.

Thus far my love to your souls has led me. I would fain have you saved; and therefore, I "travail in birth till Christ be formed in you."

O make glad my heart, make glad the heart of my great Master, make glad the hearts of all the people of God; and rejoice your parents' hearts, in complying with these wholesome counsels, which I am sure your parents will desire, if they be not worse than very beasts. In a word, seek God, and save your souls.

Now we have done with the first sort of persons with whom we undertook to deal. The tenderness of their capacity has obliged us to digress from our method which we did lay down in the entry upon this use, and which, by the Lord's assistance, we shall closely follow in what remains.

It may be, some of those who are come to age, may look upon this as tedious and unpleasant which we have been upon, because there has been nothing here but what they, it may be, knew before, and what, it may be, they judge parents might inform their children in. But we must tell such, that the design of preaching is not to gratify itching ears with new discoveries, but to reform hearts by the old yet new truths of God, which will never wear old to them who are acquaint with the power of them; that children have souls as well as they; that their souls are no less precious than those of adult persons; that we have the charge of the one as well as the other; that the Lord has sometimes been pleased to reach the heart of children by such familiar applications; that we are obliged to be all things to all men, that so we may win some to Christ. In fine, we must tell such that we are particularly obliged, by our Lord's command formerly quoted, to encourage children to come to him, and therefore we could not but endeavour to deal with them, and that in a way suitable in some measure to their capacities: what is old to you, may be new to them; and a new drop of the influences of God's Spirit would even make these very truths, which formerly you have known, have a new and better relish than formerly they had.

I shall now proceed, in the second place, to you who have stepped out of childhood into youth, or into middle age, and shall endeavour to fix guilt upon you. Hitherto we have made it appear, that you are guilty: now we come to tell you, and to condescend on some particulars whereof you are guilty. We told, nay proved, that you were defiled: now, we shall, as it were, point to the very spot. We have made it appear that you have sinned: now we shall take you to the places as it were where ye have sinned, that ye may get no way of shifting the challenge. And because now we find you in the house of God, we shall,

1. Examine you a little in reference to your conduct there. You have frequently come here; you have frequently presented yourselves before God as his people; but I fear, if your carriage in this matter be narrowly scanned, you shall be found sinners before the Lord in reference to this. I shall, in the name of that God in whose courts ye tread, put three questions to your consciences. (1.) What brings you ordinarily here? Come ye to sacrifice to the world's idol, custom, because they are ill looked upon who stay away? or come ye to stop the mouth of a natural conscience, that would give you no rest if ye staid away? or come ye to see or be seen? or to gratify curiosity merely? I fear these be the designs on which not a few of you come; and if so, then you are found guilty before God, who requires you to come upon other

designs, even to wait on him, that ye may see his power and glory in the sanctuary, as his people have seen him heretofore. (2.) What do ye here, when ye are come? Do ye hear the word of God merely as an idle tale? Do ye put truths by yourselves, and apply them to others? Do ye suffer your minds to roam up and down upon the mountains of vanity, looking at this or the other thing or person? Do you observe more the way of truths being spoken, than the truth of God itself? Are you more intent in observing the instrument than in listening to the voice of God? Let your consciences speak, and I am sure a great many of these evils ye will find yourselves guilty of. (3.) I would pose you, as to the fruit of these approaches. What good get ye for your coming? Do ye get convictions, and shift them? Do ye get calls, and sit them? Do ye hear reproofs, and hate them? Do ye hear instructions, and forget them? Who of you can clear yourselves of these sins? sins done in the very presence of God, sins wherein his honour and glory is in a more than ordinary manner concerned, because they do extremely reflect upon it.

2. We shall next follow you to your employments, and inquire a little what your carriage is there. I take it for granted, that all of you have some honest occupation or other. If there be any who have not, these persons, as they sin in wanting, because thereby they idle away God's talents; so they lie open to all sins. Now, such of you as have employments, I shall desire you to answer me a few questions in reference to your deportment in them. And, (1.) I would know if ye did consult God in the choice of them? Did ye make it your endeavour to understand what God was calling you to? God, either by giving a man special endowments, a peculiar genius, with other congruous circumstances, or by hedging up the way to all other employments, or some one such providential way or other, calls every one to a particular employment; and therefore, when we engage in any, we should endeavour to understand God's mind in it, what it is our duty to do; for we are commanded, in all our ways to acknowledge God, Prov. iii. 6. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Now, did ye in this step of your way acknowledge God, I mean in the choice of your employments? I fear, few dare say that they bowed their knee to God to crave his direction. Well, then, here your iniquities have found you out. (2.) Do ye set God before you in following your employments? Do ye make it your business to know how ye may glorify God in them? Whatever we do, we are obliged to do it to the glory of God. Let conscience now speak, and it will tell many of you, that to this very day ye never had a thought of promoting the glory of God by your employments. So that here you are found guilty, not of some one sin only, but of a tract of sin, and that even from the morning of your day continued till now. (3.) Do ye depend upon God for a blessing upon the work of your hands? Who of you dare say, that however ye do use means diligently, yet it is to God ye look for the blessing? And are ye earnest in dealing with God, that he may succeed the works of your hands, and make you prosper in them? (4.) To whom do ye attribute the success of them? When the Lord succeeds the works of your hands, do you heartily bless God for it? Dare ye say, that this leads you to praise the God of your mercies, and to walk humbly before him,

who deals kindly even with the unthankful and sinners, and has given a proof of this, in giving you success in these employments? (5.) When ye are successful in them, what use make ye of your success? Does it engage you to the ways of God, and make you walk more humbly? or are ye lifted up, and forget yourselves, and forget the Lord? And do ye spend upon the service of sin what the Lord has graciously given to you? Sure, if ye conscientiously put these questions home to your own hearts, they will discover very much sin. But,

3. We shall, in the next place, take a view of you in your converse in the world, and there see whether we can find you guilty of sin or not. And with respect to your converse in the world, I would pose you upon a few things. And,

(1.) I put the question to you, What company do you make choice of? Do ye choose the company of them that fear God, or the company of irreligious persons? I am sure, if many of you deal impartially with your own hearts in this matter, ye will find guilt. Your consciences can tell, that you have the greatest intimacy with persons who have no religion, persons who have no fear of God before their eyes; not regarding what the wise man long ago observed, that "he that walks with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. And such are all irreligious men in God's account. I would not be understood to extend this too far, as some, through a mistake dangerous enough, do, as if thereby we were forbid civil or neighbourly converse with persons that are not religious; for this is not only lawful, but a duty; we have not only scripture commands to this purpose, but the very law of nature obliges us to it; and we are sure, God did never by any positive precept enjoin us any thing contrary to this. Nay, upon the contrary, we see plainly, that a walk according to the law of nature in this matter is highly congruous to religion. If such persons do visit us, we may visit them again, and carry it friendly. This is one part of that courteousness that the apostle Peter enjoins us, 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." And whereas the refusal of civil converse, in inquiring after one another's health, visiting at some times, and the like act of kindness, is looked upon by some as a piece of strictness, it is quite otherwise; for the very contrary is determined to be a piece of perfection, by our great Lord and Master, who is the best judge, Matth. v. 47, 48. "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The plain meaning of which is this, A Christian should be a man every way beyond others, and should have something peculiar in the whole of his conduct; but if ye deal only civilly and neighbourly with those of your own persuasion, with those who in every thing do jump with you, wherein do ye go beyond the publicans and sinners, the most signally impious wretches that the world can show again? Even thieves and robbers will keep some correspondence and civility towards those of their own sort; but Christian perfection calls for more enlargement of soul, and requires that we carry obligingly to all, and perform, as occasion calls, all the duties of love, which comprehend certainly those of civil converse and neighbourliness, as the apostle puts beyond all question, 1 Cor. x

27. "If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no questions for conscience sake." Thus we see Christians are allowed to converse civilly with those who are unbelievers. And indeed not to do so, has a tendency to bring the way of God into contempt, and to make religion to be evil spoken of, and is contrary to the very spirit of the gospel, and to these many express commands which we have, of adorning the gospel, and of conversing, so as thereby we may leave a testimony upon the consciences of men. Nay, it is to bear witness against God's goodness, and to rub shame upon our religion, as if it did narrow our souls, and make us defective in those duties which it obliges us to abound in. But though what we have said doth condemn the unchristian rigidity of some, yet it will not justify the unwarrantable choice of persons who have no religion, for our intimates, or for our ordinary and daily companions. No; we are obliged to guard against this. If we do this, we are out of our duty, and therefore have no reason to promise to ourselves God's protection. A person that walks, that ordinarily converses with such men, has reason to fear that the Lord may leave him to become like to them; and this intimacy, I fear, is what most of you are guilty of.

(2.) I would ask you, What company do ye delight most in? This is a great indication of the frame of the heart. A man that takes most pleasure in the company of irreligious persons, surely sins in it. Some, when they are in the company of the godly, carry it as if they thought themselves in fetters; and whenever they get out of it, to their own companions again, their minds are at ease, and they find satisfaction; as a man doth that is loosed out of the stocks. Are there none here whose consciences can tell them that they are of this number? Let such look to the first psalm, and first verse, and there they will see how far otherwise they ought to carry it.

(3.) I would further put the question to you, What converse do ye delight in? Some, it may be, like well enough the company of persons that are religious; but it is not for their religious converse, but because they are affable, discreet, learned, judicious, or have some other such qualifications as these. If any of you say ye love the company of religious persons, is it for the religion of their converse? I fear few can say it; and therefore few can say they are clean in this matter. I shall not undertake to discourse of all the sins of converse; it would be almost endless. Only I would, with respect to your converse, desire you every night to put a question or two to your own hearts, and thereby you will discover much sin. (1.) Say, tell me now, O my soul, what have I been doing in company? Have I bridled my tongue? Have I kept it for vain, idle, and fruitless discourse, this day, in company with others? James i. 26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain;" and consequently all he doth is sin. (2.) Have I endeavoured to be edifying in my discourse? Eph. iv. 29. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." (3.) Have I spoken evil of no body? Tit. iii. 2. "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man; for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient," &c.

1 Pet. ii. 1, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." One that would observe the ordinary converse of most part of people, would be ready to think, that either they never read or heard these laws, or that they never observed what they heard. Look to yourselves here, and observe your own ways, and O what sin will appear in them? These three questions will discover almost innumerable sins every day; and if one have so many, what will many days have? Nay, how many sins in some months or years will you be guilty of. But,

(4.) If we proceed to consider you as you are related to others, we will be sure to make further discoveries of sin in your carriage. All of you stand some one or more ways related to others: ye are either masters or servants, parents or children, husbands or wives; now every one of these relations have peculiar duties belonging to them, and lay those who contract such relations under peculiar obligations to walk according to the rules prescribed them of God; and therefore we may and do sin, in walking contrary to these divine prescriptions. We shall not attempt to mention the particular sins you may be guilty of in your several relations; this were a work that would almost be endless: therefore we shall only pitch upon some generals, which may discover to your consciences that ye sin in all of them. (1.) I say most of you do sin in contracting these relations. How few masters dare say, that in the choice of their servants they went to God for counsel? And how few masters can say, that ever they acknowledged God in the choice of their servants. Nay, it may be, when ye have been anxiously desirous to have good servants, even then ye have not been at the pains to consult God; not minding that gracious direction that is given by the Spirit of God, Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Nay, is it not to be feared, that, in the choice of husbands and wives, few do inquire the mind of God? Now I am sure, if ye deal impartially with your own hearts, ye will find, that here ye have sinned, and have not acknowledged God in your ways. (2.) Do ye seek direction of God, how to carry in your relations? I fear the consciences of many of you can tell that ye never are at pains to inquire in reference to the duties called for at your hands. Most are quick-sighted enough in observing the advantages and disadvantages that redound to their temporal concerns by these relations, but have never a serious thought of the duties called for at their hand; and therefore herein ye may all in more or less find yourselves guilty. (3.) Do you make it your aim to promote the spiritual advantage of your relations? Servants, do ye pray for your masters? Masters, do ye pray for your servants, that ye may be acquainted with God's ways? If not, surely ye sin; for prayers are to be made for all, but in a special manner for those in whom we have so peculiar concernment. Nay, we fear, which is yet more sad, that there are not a few husbands and wives, parents and children, who pray not for one another. How sad is it to think, that there should, in these relations, be so much care for the outward man, and so little for the inward? The parent will toil himself night and day before the child want bread, and, it may be, so will the child do for the parent; and yet, it may be, never one of them spent an

hour in wrestling with God about one another's eternal salvation. Are there no consciences here this day accusing any of sins in this matter? Sure I am, there are here who have ground sufficient for accusation.

(5.) We shall follow you to your closets, and there a little inquire what ye do. (1.) Whether take ye most time in the morning for adorning your souls, or for adorning your bodies? I fear the soul gets the least part of your time; nay, it may be, some of you will go abroad to your employments, and never bow a knee to God. Sure here is sin enough to sink you lower than the grave. (2.) If you do pray in secret, what leads you to it? Is it conscience of duty? Is it custom or some such principle as this? I fear few can say, that when they go to prayer, they do it from a sincere respect to their duty; and therefore, I fear, but few can justify themselves as to their design in the duty. (3.) When ye do pray, is it a burden to you? Are ye soon weary of it, and glad when it is over and by hand as it were? I fear most of your consciences can tell, that it is indeed so, that ye say of the service of God, what a burden is it to you. (4.) Once more I would ask you, what good get you by your prayers? Can ye ever say, that you were heard? Can ye ever say, ye received grace for enabling you to the conscientious discharge of any duty? Most part, I fear, can say no more of their prayers, but that they prayed, or rather have said words without any sense, either of the advantage of doing so, or of the need they stand in of the things they ask of God in prayer; doth not conscience tell, that it is so with many of you.

(6.) And lastly, I would come a little nearer for the discovery of your sinfulness. I have a question or two to put to you, in reference to your thoughts. And, (1.) I ask you, What thoughts are most numerous? Whether spend ye most thoughts about your souls, or about your bodies? about God, or about the world? about other things that contribute nothing to your happiness, or about that which tends to the eternal security of your souls? Here, if ye look in, you will find crowds of sins. (2.) What thoughts take ye most delight in? If these be carnal and earthly, then such is your mind; and "to be carnally minded is death," Rom. viii. 6. (3.) What thoughts do ye allow yourselves in? and to what sort of them do ye give way? If these be not such as make for the glory of God, then here ye are found guilty before God.

Now, we have done with you of a middle age. In what we have said for conviction, we have rather mentioned such things as are unquestionably sinful, than endeavoured to restrict ourselves to those sins that are peculiarly incident to our age. This we have willingly shunned, because it would have obliged us to spend almost as many sermons as there are different ways of life to which persons of this age do betake themselves. Before I proceed to the third sort of persons, I shall put a few questions to you. (1.) Though ye had been guilty of no more sins, save these which we charged not long ago upon children, would not these have been sufficient to have ruined you. (2.) What will your case be then, who have, over and above all these which we have now laid to your charge, and referred to your consciences for proof of what we have said? (3.) When generals make you guilty of so many sins, what will particulars do? When ye are found guilty so many ways in

your thoughts or words; for example, what will be your case, when you are brought to particulars, if ye may sin by speaking idly, by speaking ill of others, what will it amount to when every particular idle word shall be charged upon you? (4.) If every sin deserves the wrath of God, what will be the case of those who shall step into eternity laden with all these innumerable evils? How many hells will their one hell have in it?

Think, and think seriously, upon these things, and I believe ye will find it hard to rest satisfied, till ye understand how such vast debts may be discharged, and how ye shall answer when reproved for so many and so great offences. Think on these things, I say, and dwell upon the thoughts of them, till ye be made to see your own misery, and then the news of a Saviour will be welcome.

I shall now proceed, in the third place, to speak to you who are old men. Ye whose faces speak your age, and tell that ye are quickly to be gone, we are now particularly to address ourselves to you, and to make good our charge of sin against you, from incontestable evidences and proofs. Give ear, therefore, old men and old women; though you be posting off the stage, and, it may be, are within a few removes of eternity, yet ye have not perhaps duly considered your own state and condition: we must tell you, in God's name, ye have sinned, and come short of his glory. And, for proof of this,

1. We need go no further than your very faces. What has consumed your youthful beauty? What has turned that smoothness, which in the days of your youth was, it may be, your own delight, and that of others, into these many wrinkles which now every one sees, and ye may feel? Has not sin, or God upon the account of sin, done it? "Thou hast filled me with wrinkles," says Job, "which is a witness against me, and my leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face," Job xvi. 8. If ye be not sinners, tell me, I pray, whence are the unsteady hands, the dim eyes, the moulder'd teeth, that paleness of the visage, that approaches near to the colour of that mould into which a little hence ye are to be turned? Are not all these things proofs of your guilt, and witnesses against you?

2. Have ye not passed through childhood and youth? and have not ye the sins done in these ages to count for? What, how many, and how grievous they are, ye may in some measure understand from what has been discoursed on this head some days past. Now sure, if your consciences have been awake all the while, you might understand your concernment in these things, and how deeply guilty ye are though ye had no more to account for but these. It is accounted by the Spirit of God, to be one of the great miseries of the wicked, that they shall lie down in their graves with their bones full of the sins of their youth: "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust," Job xx. 11. These, though there were no more, will rot your bones, gnaw your hearts, and make you lose the repose which many times ye propose to yourselves in the grave.

3. Ye have had much time, and have, no doubt, lost much time. Many precious hours, and days, and years, are spent and gone, and nothing, or nothing to purpose, done in them. And for evincing this, I shall put a few questions to you about the improvement of your time (1.)

What have ye done for God in it? The great business ye came into the world for, the great design of your creation, was the advancement of the glory of God: "the Lord hath made all things for himself, and even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. Now, are there not old men and old women here, who have lived all their days, and dare not say, that to this very day they ever had a serious thought of advancing the glory of God? To such we say, Ye have hitherto done nothing but sinned; your whole life has been nothing but one continued tract of sin. As many thoughts, as many words, as many actions, so many sins. (2.) What have ye done for the church of God? Every one is obliged to do something or other for the church, Psal. cxxii. 6, 7, 8. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee: because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." Now, are there not old men and old women here, who never shed one tear for the church of God, who never were concerned for its welfare. I fear there are not a few here, even old people, who have seen many changes, but never had any concern for the church of God. If their private worldly concerns went well with them, it was all a matter to them what became of religion: let it sink or swim, it was all one to them. Such are grievous sinners before the Lord. (3.) What have you done for your souls? The Lord has given every one of us a great work to do. We have our salvation to work out with fear and trembling. He has given us a day to do it in; and that day is to be followed with an evening wherein none can work. Now, what of this work is byhand? Your day is almost spent: is it not the twilight with many of you already? I fear, I fear, there are here old men, over whom the shadows of the everlasting evening is just ready to be stretched forth, who have their work yet to begin. O sad and mournful condition! A great work to begin! a work that hath cost many waking nights, and sore toil and labour for many years: and this ye have to begin now, when your day is almost gone, when your sun is setting, is, as it were, going in over the hill, and ready immediately to dump down, and leave you in eternal night? This case were enough even to rend a heart of stone, and to force tears from a rock, if duly considered. O! what sin, what folly, what misery, is there here!

4. You have seen many providences, both such as were of a more public nature, and concerned the state of the church of God in general, and such as concerned yourselves more particularly. Now, here I again inquire, (1.) What observations have ye made? The providences of God deserve to have a peculiar mark put upon them. "Remember that thou magnify his works which men behold," Job xxxvi. 24. is a command of God that extends to all: and it is a grievous sin, for which we find a professing people heavily threatened, that they did not regard the Lord's doings: "Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them: and the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands," Isa. v. 11, 12. Now, are there not providences lost, and therefore as many sins? (2.) What ex-

periences have ye got? Many providences afford many experiences; and they who have managed them to advantage, have reaped notable advantages by them, for their confirmation in the ways of God; and if ye have not done so, ye have as many sins as ye have lost experiences. (3.) Where have they left you? nearer or further off from God than they found you? Every providence, mercy, or judgment, that has not brought you nearer to God, has carried you further from him; and consequently therein he have sinned. O what multitudes of sins are here!

5. As you are guilty by committing sins of your own, so you have contracted much guilt by seeing other men sin, when you have not been suitably exercised therewith. That we should be exercised with other men's sins, the scripture makes mention expressly. Now, that I may let you see how many ways ye have sinned here, I pose you upon it. (1.) You have seen many sins committed: what testimonies have ye given against them? Every one that sees God dishonoured, should give a testimony for him, either by reproving sin, according to the direction of the apostle, Eph. v. 11. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them:" or, by withdrawing from the society of such, according to the command of the Spirit of God, who bids us "go from the presence of a foolish man, when we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge," Prov. xiv. 7. For sometimes any other reproof, than by withdrawing, may be improper; for the wise man forbids us to "reprove a scorner, lest he hate us," Prov. ix. 8. : or, if this cannot be got done, without the neglect of moral duties, there is yet another way we may give a testimony against sin; and that is by a circumspect walk, evidencing a regard to God, a belief of his threatenings, and the advantage of religion. Thus Noah reprov'd or condemned the old world, Heb. x. 7. Now speak, old sinners, what testimonies of this sort have ye given against sin? As many as ye have neglected, as many sins ye stand guilty of before the Lord. (2.) Ye have seen many sins; how many tears have ye shed? I fear there are here old men and old women, who never sighed, who never groaned or cried for all the abominations that they have seen committed in our land. It is our duty to mourn for the sins of others. There is a mark of preservation ordered to be put upon the foreheads of them that mourn for the sins of the land wherein they live, Ezek. ix. 4. "And the Lord said unto him (the man that had the writer's ink-horn by his side), Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." And in the following verse, the destroying angel is commanded to spare neither old nor young, save only those who have that mark upon them. I fear there are few mourners here, among those who have seen many and monstrous sins. I shall not now speak of the national abominations which you have seen: but I am sure there are few of you come to age, who have not heard many horrid oaths sworn: you have seen horrid villainies committed; many dreadful provocations. Now, dare ye say with the Psalmist, in that 119th Psalm, ver. 53. "Horror hath taken hold of me, because transgressors keep not thy law." It may be, old hardened sinners think little of this sin; yet God is brought in, as it

were, wondering at it, in Jer. xxxvi. 24. when the roll containing Jeremiah's prophecies was burnt, it is noted as a wonderful, a monstrous wickedness, that they were not concerned, that they did not mourn: "Yet," says God, "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants, that heard all these words." I fear, even those who speak against sins of others, are guilty of them, by not mourning over them. (3.) You have seen many sins; and how many prayers have ye put up for the pardon of them? There is an express command to this purpose, 1 John v. 16. "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." It may be, ye have condemned others, and cried out upon them for their sins, while in the mean time ye are partakers with them, because of your not praying for them, according to this command.

6. I say to you, ye are great sinners, for ye have had many mercies, and I fear have abused mercies. If I should begin here to recount particular mercies, I might know where to begin, but scarce where to make an end. I shall only inquire at you, (1.) Do ye yet know the God of your mercies? Hos. ii. 8. I fear many of you dare not say it. (2.) What improvement have ye made of them? Has the goodness of God led you to repentance, as it should do? Rom. ii. 4. (3.) Once more, I ask you, have you returned to the Lord, according to the mercies received? Put but these three questions home to your own consciences, and I believe they will discover many sins which ye never yet thought of.

7. Old sinners, ye have undergone many changes; ye are far decayed. Then let me ask you, (1.) Are your souls renewed, as your outward man perishes? I fear, I fear, there are few among you who are bringing forth fruit in old age, who, when others fade, are fat and full of sap. (2.) Has your love to sin decayed? If this change were to be observed, it were a great blessing; but I fear, that however strength may be failed so far that ye cannot fulfil your lusts as formerly, yet the old love to them remains.

8. Old sinners, ye have seen much of the world; and here I ask you, are ye not guilty. (1.) By neglecting many discoveries of its vanity, which might have been of great use to you, if duly observed? (2.) By retaining the same love to it, after many discoveries of its uncertainty and emptiness?

9. Once more, and I have done with you. Old sinners, you have lived long, and death is at the door. God has given you much time to provide for it; and I fear ye are guilty, extremely guilty, by not improving time. And for discovering your sin here, I shall lay a few questions before you, and I plead that ye may lay them home to your own consciences. (1.) Are ye still content to die? It is the indispensable duty of all, to be content to comply with the will of God in this matter; and upon a call, to be ready cheerfully to comply with the will of God as to death, the time and manner of it. Now, old sinners, are ye content? It may be, some of you will forwardly enough answer, that ye are content: but if ye say so, I ask you, (2.) Are ye ready to die? I fear some are content to die, who are not ready: some may, in a fit of discontent at the world, upon the back of some notable disappointment, be so well content to die, that they will lay hands upon themselves, who

are yet very far from being ready to die. If ye pretend that ye are, then, for discovering the truth of what ye say, I inquire, (3.) Are your sins dying? A person whose sins are lively, he is never ready to die. (4.) Are ye in Jesus Christ? Those who are out of him are never ready to die. It is only those who are ready to "die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. who are ready indeed to die. (5.) Is your pardon sealed? Death will try you; and if your pardon be not sealed, ye will find that ye are scarce ready to die. (6.) I put this one question more to you: Have you provided your lodgings? It is high time, when men's houses are falling, to be looking out for new lodgings. This tabernacle is ready to be dissolved: have ye a building of God, not made with hands, secured to yourselves? God has given you time and means for doing all this; and if ye have not done it, then you have sinned against the Lord, and against your own souls.

Now, old sinners, if ye lay not to heart this warning, and lay not yourselves in the dust before God, for your sins, then this new warning, among many others, will be a dreadful aggravation of your guilt. Consider your case in time, before it be too late. Are there not many who were not born for many years after you, and who it may be, are dead many years ago, and having wrought their work, have got a blessed immortality? yet, it may be, to this day ye know not what shall become of your souls. Think, old sinners, is it not a wonder that God has given you this warning, after making light of so many: and will it not be a cutting reflection, if ye sit a warning near to the twelfth hour?

Now, children, young men and fathers, old and young, I have, by an appeal to your own consciences, made good my charge against you, and fixed a great many particular sins upon you. I shall now proceed,

FOURTHLY, To show what satisfaction that sovereign King, at whose instance, and in whose name, I have impleaded you, requires of all and every one of you. His justice, at any rate, must be satisfied. It is not congruous to reason, it is not congruous to the holiness, justice, and wisdom of the Lawgiver, that sin should escape unpunished, and therefore it is impossible it should pass without some signal and suitable remark of God's displeasure. He has declared positively in his word, he has confirmed it in his providence, that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished," Prov. ix. 21. If angels and men should lay their hands and heads together, mite their wit and their power, they shall not preserve one sin from the marks of God's displeasure. Some signal and evident token of it will reach sin, wherever it is. There needs no proof of this, after what Christ has met with. And ye must lay your account with it, that this punishment will not be some petty inconsiderable one. It must be in some measure suited to the crimes ye stand impleaded of. It must, on the one hand, hold some proportion to the holiness and purity of that law you have broken; to the majesty and authority of that God whose authority ye have trampled upon; yea, it must hold some proportion to these several aggravations of your respective sins. Lay your account with it, sinners, escape you cannot his hands, who is every where. "Whither will ye go from his Spirit? whither will ye flee from his presence? If ye ascend up into heaven, he is there; if ye make your bed in hell, behold he is there; if ye take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, even there shall

his hand lead thee, and his right hand shall hold thee. If ye say, Surely the darkness shall cover you, even the night shall be light about you; for the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to him," Psal. cxxxix. 7—12. "There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves," Job xxxiv. 22. from his eye, or secure themselves against the inquiry God will make, or the strokes that his almighty arm will inflict. Punished then sinners must be. And if ye ask, what satisfaction will he have of such sinners? I answer,

1st, He will have you punished in your estates, by a forfeiture of all. You invaded God's possession; he will cast you out of yours. This is the ordinary punishment of rebellion; and we have proven you guilty of rebellion of the worst sort. Man, when God made him, was master of a fair estate. The sons of men may now value themselves upon some petty tenements which many of them hold by no good right, as we shall see anon; but none of them can vie possessions with Adam in innocency. He had a paradise replenished with all the rarities of innocent, of incorrupted nature, all the delicacies which the earth did yield before it lost its strength by that curse which man's disobedience brought it under, while it was impregnated by the blessing of God; and as he had this in possession, so he had heaven in expectation, a noble and seemingly unfailling, prospect of a paradise above. This was Adam's estate; and this should have been the estate of his posterity, his descendants: but all is forfeited by sin. Had Adam stood, he had then transmitted to us a goodly heritage, and none should have had reason to complain of his possession: but now we have by sin forfeited all; we have no estate, no heritage. O sinners! by your sin ye have lost the right to all your enjoyments here, and all prospect of any comfortable being hereafter. Adam, when he sinned, was banished out of paradise, and that was guarded against him.

But ye will say, We are not forfeited; for we enjoy houses, lands, meat, and clothing, and a great many other such things; how can ye then say, that we lost all? by what means get we these things? I answer, (1.) A rebel sentenced to die is by the king allowed food, raiment, and other necessaries, for the sustenance of nature, till the time of the execution come; just so God, for holy ends not now to be inquired into, having reprieved man for a while, suffers him to enjoy some such things, till he sees meet to put the sentence of death in execution, and then the forfeiture will take place. (2.) We say, ye have no right to any enjoyment, save that just now mentioned. The grant whereby innocent man held all his possessions was the covenant of works: this was the ground of his security as to what he possessed, and the foundation of his hope as to what he further expected. Now, this covenant being broken by your sin, ye have no more right to any enjoyment. (3.) As ye have already lost the right and title, so ye have lost the sweetness of all your enjoyments. Ye toil and sweat, but ye are not satisfied: "What profit have ye of all your labour under the sun?" It is not able to give you satisfaction. This we have at great length made appear in our lectures upon Ecclesiastes. (4.) To conclude, in a very little ye will be entirely deprived of all. The day of the execution of the sentence draws on, when God will snatch all your enjoyments out of your hands. Now, indeed, some

have more, and some have less, according to the pleasure of the great Judge, who has allowed every one their portion till the day of execution come, and then all will go.

2dly, God, at whose instance ye have been impeached of sin, will have satisfaction in the death of the offenders. God threatened death to Adam in paradise; "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or "dying thou shalt die," Gen. ii. 17; and "the soul that sinneth shall die," saith the Lord by the prophet, Ezek. xviii. 20.; "for the wages of sin is death." This is not to be limited to a natural death; no, but is of a huge extent. It takes in a threefold death, a death spiritual, natural, eternal. Man in innocency had a threefold life, either in possession or prospect. (1.) A spiritual life, which consisted in the union of his soul to God, in a measure suited to his present condition, and in the fitness of all his faculties and power for acting and doing what was well-pleasing unto God. (2.) A natural life, which consisted in the union of soul and body. That lovely pair, his innocent soul and pure body, were matched together, and linked to one another, by a thought, surpassing art; so that they had a most near alliance, being compacted into one person by a tie so strong, as to occasion a notable sympathy: and yet so secret, that no eye could ever see, no mind ever discover, this imperceptible chain. (3.) Man had then a fair prospect of eternal life, in a full and close union to God, never to admit of any interruption, or of any such interposition, as was between man and him in this lower world. But now upon his sin, he lost all by virtue of the primitive threatening of death to the soul that sins. Answerably hereunto, God will have you punished with a threefold death. O sinners! his heart will not pity you, his eye will not spare you. You are already condemned to die: "He that believeth not," that is, every sinner by nature, "is condemned already," says the Spirit of God. Nay more, ye are not only condemned already, O sinners! but moreover the execution is begun: the fire of God's wrath is already kindled against you; there are some drops begun to fall, before the shower come that will entirely destroy you. (1.) You are spiritually dead. I speak to all of you who are not savingly changed by grace, being begotten again from the dead, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You are dead in trespasses and sins, utterly unmeet to entertain communion and fellowship with God. As a dead man cannot speak, act, or exercise any vital power; so neither can ye act any thing that is spiritually good, or well-pleasing to God. This is a heavy punishment, though as yet ye be not sensible of it. (2.) Natural death, that consists in the separation of the soul from the body, is already begun. Every disease that seizes upon our bodies is like the "posts that run to meet one another, to tell the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end," Jer. li. 31. Every disease makes a breach in our walls, and tells that all will in a little fall down flat. Your very life is nothing else but a succession of dying: every day and hour wears away part of it: and so far as it is already spent, so far are ye already dead and buried. Diseases and natural decays do lay close siege, as it were, to your bodies, ronting their guards, battering the walls of your flesh, and forcing your souls to quit the outworks, and retire into the heart: and every minute, ye have reason to fear that ye may be taken in, and become a prey to death. In one word

sinner! ye are the mark at which justice shoots its arrows. Do not ye see sometimes the arrow flee over your head, and slay some great person, your superior? Sometimes it lights at your feet, and kills a child or a servant, or those who are inferior; sometimes it passeth by your left hand, and kills an enemy, at whose death possibly ye rejoice; and anon it strikes the friend of your right hand; and possibly the very next arrow may strike you dead, be ye young or old, eternally dead, and hurry you into hell.

3dly, Your death will not do all; this punishment reaches your honours. Rebels are wont to have their honours torn: and so God has determined with respect to you, O sinners! Man was in his first estate advanced to a high dignity, he was the friend as well as subject of God; and he was his deputy in this lower world, as the Psalmist tells us: "thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea," Psalm viii. 5—8. Thus was he crowned with glory and honour: but now, O sinners! the sentence is passed against all the race of sinful Adam: thus saith the Lord, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown from the head of sinners." The crown is fallen indeed from your head. Now, tell me, O sinners! do not you already feel the direful effects of this part of your punishment? Those beasts which were once man's subjects, are now turned his enemies, because he is God's enemy. Do not the very flies insult you, and make sometimes your life uneasy? Do not the wild beasts of the field terrify you? Are not some of them daily making inroads upon you, devouring your cattle, carrying away your substance? And even those which are most serviceable, and seem to retain something of their respect to man, sometime their Lord, do they not rebel? Doth not the horse sometimes throw his rider, the ox gore his owner? Thus man has lost his honour; nay, now he who once did reign is become sin's slave, and thereby falls under the lashes of sin and Satan's slaves. This, O sinners! is a part of your punishment.

4thly, This will not yet satisfy justice. God pursues the quarrel to posterity: "I am a jealous God," says he, in a threatening annexed to the third command, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children." Rebel children suffer with the fathers in all nations; and shall not rebellion against God be as severely punished as that which is against an earthly sovereign? If an Achan steal a Babylonish garment, and sin against the God of Israel, then he and his whole family shall fall, man, wife, and child; nay, and the very household stuff, his ox, and his asses. God will pursue the quarrel to a dreadful length. You may see this terrible tragedy described by God, in Joshua vii. 24. God will spare nothing that sinners have used. Because sinners have trode upon this earth, it must undergo the fire at the last day, before it can be freed from the bondage of corruption. O sinners, ye transmit a sad legacy to your wretched posterity! a legacy of which the distressed church, Lam. v. 7. heavily complains: "Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities."

5thly, Once more: God pursues his quarrel yet further. He will have your names eternally ruined. "The memory of the wicked shall rot," Prov. x. 7. After he has killed your bodies and souls, and child-

ren, and ruined your estates, then he will kill your names, that there shall no remembrance of you be upon the earth, unless it be the stench of a rotten name. Thus will the Lord deal with you, O sinners! The whirlwind of the Lord, that goes forth with fury, will blow away all your enjoyments, turn you out of all your possessions. The Lord will banish you his presence. That Almighty arm that stretched out the heavens, will tear your souls from your bodies, and throw you headlong into perdition; the weight of infinite wrath will sink you down into the bottomless pit; and omnipotence will dig a grave for your memory, wherein it will eternally rot. For the greatness of your iniquity ye may expect this: "This is thy lot, the portion of thy measure from me, saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood," Jer. xiii. 25. This is the satisfaction God requires: and think on it; this way will he be glorified in your ruin, if ye continue in your sins.

I have at some length proved you all to be offenders; that God demands a reparation; and what that reparation is, which he doth demand of his injured honour, I have at some length made appear; I now proceed, according to the method proposed,

FIFTHLY, To demonstrate the reasonableness of this demand. I have shown your ways to be most unequal; now I come to show, that God's ways are most equal, and that he acts very reasonably in demanding so high: and this will appear to the conviction of the most obstinate sinner, if the considerations we offer for clearing this be duly weighed. And,

1st, Let it be considered, That sin deserves such a punishment; and therefore it is very just to inflict it. Nay, I might perhaps run this a little higher, and assert, that therefore it would be unjust to require any less, any more easy punishment. That sin deserves it, is very plain, if we consider,

1. Against whom it strikes. This is the way of measuring offences agreed to all the world over, that the measure should be taken from the consideration of those against whom they strike. This we may observe in the laws of God, which enjoin that offences shall be punished according to the quality and condition of the offenders and the offended. The daughter of the high-priest, if she committed uncleanness, was to be burned without mercy, Lev. xxi. 9.; so was not every one who was guilty in that way. Again, he that curseth his father and mother is adjudged to die, Lev. xx. 9.; so is not he that curseth his equal. The same measure is kept in our laws: if one kills his equal, then he dies; but there doth not thereby redound any injury to his posterity; but if a man kills the king, or makes any attempt against the government, then life, lands, name, and all goes. Now, if we consider in this case the quality of the offender, a poor mean worm, that dwells in cottages of clay, that has his foundation in the dust, that is crushed before the moth, that holds all of God; and then, on the other hand, consider him who is offended by every sin, not a prince or some great man, who is but flesh and blood at the best, but "the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, he who is a great God, and a great King, above all the earth: behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted

to him less than nothing, and vanity." To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? there is no proportion here. Now, if it deserves so severe a punishment that is committed against man, what must it not deserve that is committed against this God? As it were injurious to compare God to man; so it is injurious to compare the demerit of any offence committed against man, and the demerit of that which is committed against the great God.

2. Consider the damage that sin doth; and then we will see what sin deserves: we will see that the terrible punishment we have been discoursing of, is nothing too severe. If we consider man with respect to the creatures that are under him, the inanimate part of the creation, and the brutes; he was appointed to be their mouth, by which they should pay homage to their Creator; he was to be their treasurer, to pay in a revenue of glory for them to their Creator and Governor; but man by sin puts himself out of all capacity for this; he lays an ill example before his fellow creatures. But all this is nothing, when compared with the injury he doth to God by every sin. This if thoroughly and well understood, would for ever clear the justice of God in punishing sin with eternal punishment. True it is, indeed, what Elihu says, "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgression be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?" Job xxxv. 6; that is to say, God lies beyond our reach; we cannot by our sins detract from, as neither can we by our holiness add to his happiness: but this is no proof that we do him no injury. A rebel clapt up in prison, or in the hand of the king's guards, is not able to reach the prince's person, nor render him dissatisfied; yet he may then injure him, and doth it. when he unjustly reflects upon his government. Just so is it with sinners; indeed, they cannot scale the walls of heaven, they are not able to climb over the eternal ramparts, which raise the fence of the Almighty's sacred throne, and there stab his person; but yet they injure him in his name and honour, and even in his life, by every sin: it is intended murder; and this is death by the laws of God and man. That among men it is not always punished so, is only because it is not always discovered; for when it is discovered by words, or overt though ineffectual actions, it is punished. Every sin spits upon God's holiness, tramples upon his authority, brands his wisdom with folly, denies his goodness, and braves, and gives a defiance to his power: what punishment then can be too great for this? Now sure,

3. Sin deserves it, if we consider the obligations that are by every sin trampled upon. Every one will own, that the sins of children against their parents, of servants against their masters, of subjects against their lord, and the wives against their husbands, are sins of a black line, a crimson dye, and deserve therefore a very severe punishment; and accordingly are so punished in all nations: but all those obligations are nothing to what we all lie under to God; so that there is more perfidy, falsehood, and treachery, in all our sins against God, than in any of those: therefore it is but just that there should be a proportion kept betwixt the offences and the punishment.

4. That sin deserves such a punishment, is the judgment of God; and we know that his judgment is always according to truth. It is not the mistaken notion of a man, who in the most momentous truths may trip; but

it is the judgment of the only wise God, who is a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed. I think we need not go so far back at present for a proof of this as the penal sanction of the law, so long as we have the death of Christ, as an evidence of it, nearer hand. If an infinite person, standing in the sinner's room, must, for his sins, have such a load of wrath laid upon him, what less must the punishment of the sinner himself be than eternal wrath? None can pretend to believe the truth of the gospel, and question the justice of God in punishing sinners eternally; for is it not ridiculous to admire divine severity in the eternal punishment of wicked men, and not to attend to infinite justice punishing severely his own beloved Son? What wonder is it that wicked men should be for ever tormented for their own sins, if the most righteous Son of God suffered for the sins of others? He that without a reproach to his goodness, could endure his most dear Son to suffer so long as one hour, will much better endure unjust sinners to be tormented with eternal punishment.

5. That sin deserves such a punishment, is not only the judgment of God, but of men too. The common reason of mankind speaks its justice. This appears by the sentiments the heathens had of this matter. They had not a revelation to guide them, and therefore had wild fancies about the matter of these punishments, which they judged to be eternal; but that there were such punishments, and that they were just, they had no doubt. Hence it was that their poets did condemn Tantalus to such a place, where he should have rivers just washing up to his lip, and yet should not be able to drink of them; and so remain eternally under the violence of thirst, with this gnawing aggravation, that he had waters just at his very lip. But we may yet have a more clear proof of the judgments of men in all nations, in their sanctions of human laws. Do not all of them for crimes, condemn to perpetual imprisonment, or to death? The one is an eternal punishment of loss of life and all its concomitant advantages; and this punishment is inflicted without respect to a future life; as appears in this, that such laws are executed upon them, of whom none has reason to think that they shall have any share in the advantages of a future life. And that perpetual imprisonment is not eternal imprisonment, is not because that it is thought unjust, but because neither the law-makers, who put it into execution, nor they who break it, live to eternity.

6. That sin deserves eternal punishment, appears from the acknowledgment of the punished. This is a very strong argument; for although they who are yet wallowing in their sins, and are lulled fast asleep in the lap of carnal security, will not acknowledge so much; yet if we inquire at those whom God has awakened, and to whom he has given a discovery of the exceeding sinfulness of their sins, whether with a prospect of mercy or not, they all with one mouth acknowledge that sin deserves eternal wrath. Those whom the Lord deals with, in order to their conversion, will all subscribe to the justice of God, should he damn them eternally. I do not say that they will be content to be damned; but they will own that God were most just should he deal so by them. And not only is it so with them, but even with those who are sunk to the utmost in black despair. If we listen to a Spira, who has laid aside all hopes of mercy, we shall hear him crying out in the an-

guish of his soul one day, "I am sealed up to eternal wrath: I tell you I deserve it; my own conscience condemns me, what needeth any other judge?" and another day, again, we may hear him crying out, "Though there were not another damned, yet God is just in making me an example to others; and I cannot justly complain. There is no punishment so great but I have justly deserved it." These considerations do sufficiently evince, that sin deserves eternal punishment; and therefore God has good reason to demand it.

2dly, Our great Lord and Master has great reason to punish you with such punishment, not only because your offences deserve it, but because he, in the institution and promulgation of his laws, did actually declare that he would so punish the transgressor of it. Sin and eternal punishment were then linked together. With the same very breath that God said to Adam, thou shalt keep my commandments, he also said to him, "In the day that thou breakest them, thou shalt surely die." That the annihilation of his soul should be there intended, is contrary to scripture, and has no ground in reason; and if only temporal death is meant, then this would be implied, to say, Thou shalt be rewarded with eternal life if thou sin; which were ridiculous to imagine. That therefore which is intended is certainly eternal death. And God having annexed this penalty to the violation of his law, there is great reason that it should be punctually executed. For,

1. The honour of his wisdom requires it. To what purpose should this penalty be annexed, if it were not on design that it should be put in execution? or at least it would reflect upon his wisdom, if it might not with great reason be put in execution.

2. Justice to his honour, as he is the righteous Judge of the earth, calls for the execution of this law. What, I pray, is the business of one placed in that high station, if not to see laws executed, to see the compliers with them rewarded, and the offenders condignly punished?

3. Justice to the law requires the punishment of sinners: for if the law in one part may be neglected, why not in all? The threatening as well as the precept, has upon it the impress of the supreme authority; and therefore, as by the violation of the precept, so by the non-execution of the penalty, the honour of the law suffers. If the penalty be required, then the honour of the precept is repaired; but if the penalty be neglected, then the law is entirely affronted, and there is no reparation; than which there can be nothing more unreasonable.

4. Justice to on-lookers. To neglect the punishment of offenders, is of dangerous influence to beholders; it betrays them into one of two or three dangerous mistakes; it has a tendency either to make them entertain light apprehensions of sin, or else to make them call in question, either the knowledge, power, or wisdom of God, and his zeal for his own glory: therefore justice to them requires that the penal sanction of the law be vigorously put in execution.

5. Justice to God's faithfulness. The honour of the divine veracity requires it. God engaged his faithful word for the accomplishment of the threatening; therefore, either the truth of God must lie open to suspicion, or else the punishment must be inflicted upon you.

6. To add no more considerations under this head; by annexing eternal punishment to the commission of sin, all the divine attributes were

engaged to see it executed. Of the justice, wisdom, and sovereignty of God, it has already been made appear; and it might with equal facility be evinced, as to the unchangeableness of God, his goodness, power, and knowledge; therefore he has reason to demand so high a satisfaction.

3dly, Sin not only deserves that heavy and eternal punishment we have been discoursing of, and not only has God adjudged, by an irreversible appointment, that it should be so punished; but we say, moreover, that God has just reason to inflict it, because this appointment of God linking sin and punishment together, is most just and equal. This puts it beyond all rational doubt, that God has reason to treat you as he will do. Now, the justice of this penal sanction, I shall open to you in several considerations. And,

1. This is plain from that which we have at great length discoursed of already, in reference to the demerit of sin. We have proved, by many incontestable evidences, that sin deserves the highest punishment that can be inflicted. Now, just authority can never be but just, in punishing a crime, or annexing a penalty to it, that is proportioned to its own nature; and this is plainly the case here.

2. God has made this sanction; therefore it is just. This, I think, needs no proof, the Judge of all the earth cannot do wrong, he is a God of truth, and without iniquity. Our ways may be unequal, his can never be so; for were God unrighteous, "how could he then judge the world?" says the apostle, Rom. iii. 6. His will is the measure of justice to us: "He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can say to him, What dost thou?" Dan. iv. 35. If once we quit the will of God for the standard and measure of justice, then we wander and lose ourselves, and are never likely to find any other thing that can with any shadow of reason pretend to the place.

3. This appointment of God is most just, because it was made in way of a contract. There was a covenant between God and Adam. God did propose the whole matter to him; and the substance of it was this, Do, and live; Sin, and die. Man was content, and that upon deliberation, with the terms; and therefore the justice of God is clear in this matter.

4. God did warn man before-hand of this punishment; and therefore he is very just in the matter; which will appear very considerable, if we observe, that as man is unquestionably obliged to obey God, so God has an unquestionable right to command; and that not only upon account of his supereminent excellency, but on account of his creation, preservation, and innumerable benefits; therefore he commanding to man what is just and equal, may do it upon what penalty he pleases, without any shadow of injustice; as I shall make appear by this plain and familiar instance: I suppose the lord of a manor to have placed or made a precipice in some part of his land, and that he forbids his servant to go there, and tells him, if he do, he will be sure to fall there and be killed: Who would say that he were guilty of that servant's death, if the servant should go there? And I say, God can with as little justice be charged with the death of sinners, or with severity, since he gives them fair warning. They choose damnation, and their destruction is of themselves. This was perfectly the case of man at first; and that afterwards

he fell under a fatal inability to abstain from sin, no more clears him, or makes God faulty, than it would clear the servant formerly mentioned, or make his master blame-worthy, if the way to that precipice lay stooping downward, and the servant should, upon the beginning of the descent, run with so full a career, that he were not able to halt till he had broke his neck. This I suppose, would not reflect upon the master, that he did not remove that precipice, or alter the way. And this is the case between God and man.

5. Consider the influence that this penal sanction has upon them that are saved ; and wherein we may see that God was most just in appointing it. It is the means to bring them to heaven. It moves ministers to preach : " Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men," 1 Cor. v. 11. And it moves the hearers to accept of salvation, as appears from the frequent use our Lord makes of this argument. And in the original constitution of the law, it was designed as a mean, not only for the reparation of its violated honour, but also to deter men from breaking the law ; therefore God is most just in the whole of his conduct in this matter ; since the greater the penalty was, the more likely a mean it was to hold men in the way.

6. I thought to have further cleared the equity of this appointment of God, whereby sin is ordained thus to be punished, from the consideration of the necessity thereof, in order to the government of the world. If men have yet such boldness to sin, notwithstanding the severity of these punishments, what would they have done, if there had been only some light temporary punishment to be inflicted ? This consideration would lead me too far from the subject in hand ; therefore I but name it, and proceed to the

SIXTH and last general, which I proposed for the improvement of this doctrine. I have unfolded, at some length, the crime charged upon you. I have proved, both in general and in particular, that ye have all sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God. I have showed what the satisfaction is which justice requires. I have likewise made appear, and have given you some account, how reasonable it is that justice should carry its demands so high. It remains now, that we shortly represent your misery from the whole. But here indeed I am at a loss how to begin ; and if once I begin, shall find myself at no less a strait where to end. Sinners, I have proved you ; and miserable I shall endeavour to represent you, upon this account,

1st, If a vast loss can make you miserable, then, indeed ye shall be so. Your loss can be imagined by none, but those who enjoy the advantages you lose, or those who are already in the place of torment, and have their eyes opened to see their own condition. It is such a loss, that you cannot from one place have a full prospect of it, I mean of that little portion of it which may be known without feeling ; and therefore we shall give you some different views of it, as it were from distinct places, at each of which ye may see some, and but some small part of it.

1. I say your loss shall be great : for ye shall lose the world, with all its comforts, delights, and satisfactions. Are ye now possessed of a competent estate, a flourishing family, health of body, content of mind, and a fair stock of reputation ? Ye shall lose all these things ; and will

not this be a vast loss to you? Are not these the things that bound your desires, and terminate all your wishes and inquiries? I fear they are so to most of you. They who have their portion only in this life, seek no more but these things. All the question with such is, "Who will show us any good? Any worldly good; and if they lose these things, then indeed they lose all. They may say their gods are taken away; and what have they more? Whatever is desirable to the eyes, or pleasant to any of your senses, ye shall at once, for ever, and eternally be deprived of. And is not this a vast loss? Since it must be so in many of your eyes, ye shall lose that which ye valued above heaven and Christ. It may be, some of you clave so fast to a present world, that neither the promises nor the threats of the gospel can induce ye to quit your hold: yet notwithstanding of all your endeavours to keep them, ye shall lose them all. Death will part you and them: and O how great will this loss be to you who have no more!

2. When God punishes you, ye will sustain the loss of the gospel, which now ye enjoy: and this will appear to be a vast loss then. The gospel has in it treasures for the poor, eyes for the blind, feet for the lame, understanding for the simple, peace for rebels, pardons for condemned malefactors, a title to heaven for the heirs of hell, life for the dead, happiness for the miserable: and to lose all these, what loss can be comparable to this? This loss, when it is now spoken of, may appear small to you: but the day is coming, when ye will learn to put a high value upon it, after ye have lost it.

3. Ye will sustain a vast loss; for infallibly ye lose heaven, if ye continue in your sins; and who can tell what a loss that is? Who can sound the depth of those "rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand for evermore." Who can weigh that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Who can take the dimensions of that vast "inheritance of the saints in light?" Who can declare the sweetness of the fruits of that paradise of pleasure? What eye can discern or let in just apprehensions of that bliss-giving sight, which the saints enjoy above, where there are no clouds to obscure the face of their sky? Well, whatever there is of these things, all these ye lose. O immense loss indeed!

We only name these things, designing now to hasten to another subject. Would ye know how great a loss ye sustain in the first instance mentioned? We may send you to those who are wallowing in the delights of the sons of men, and who are glutting themselves with a present world. They will tell you strange things of your loss by the removal of worldly comforts. If ye would understand how great your loss is by the removal of the gospel, go to those who have got a heart to embrace it, and they will give you a surprising account of their enjoyments by it. But who can tell what heaven is? they only who have been there; and even scarce they; for surely they feel, they enjoy more than what can be expressed. Now, all these things ye lose. But need I say more? Ye lose God: ye lose your own souls; and if ye lose your own souls, and gain a world, what profit have ye? yea, ye sustain a vast loss: what must then your loss be, when ye not only lose your own souls, but lose with it all that is in this world, all that is good and comfortable in that which is to come?

2dly, As ye sustain a great loss, so ye must suffer a vast torment. The former particular, namely, the punishment of loss, I did only touch at : because I had occasion, in the doctrinal part, to discourse a little of it ; but here, when I come to speak of the punishment of sense, I shall be a little more large, yet so as not to exceed the bounds of this day's discourse. O sinners ! miserable are ye, if huge, vast, and intolerable torments can make you so. A view of your misery on this account, I shall give you in a very few particulars.

1. If ye would understand what your case is eternally to be, ye must consider what of you it is that is to be eternally tormented. Our Lord tells us of both soul and body as being destroyed in hell, Matth. x. 28. "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And this gives us to understand what is to be the subject of these torments, sinners are to sustain. It is not a finger or toe : it is not a tooth or a joint : no ; but it is the whole man, soul and body, that are to be tormented. And how will ye be able to endure this ? If a drop of scalding water fall upon your hand, ye are ready to cry out of intolerable pain : but how will ye then bear it, when a full shower of brimstone, a deluge of burning wrath, will fall upon the whole man ? Ye are not now able to hold your finger to the fire : how will you then endure, when soul and body shall be cast alive into devouring fire and everlasting burnings ? If now the trouble of one part of the body occasion so terrible a disorder, what will your case be, when every faculty of your souls, every member, every joint, sinew, artery of your body, shall be brim-full of wrath.

2. Consider, who is the contriver of these torments. There have been some very exquisite torments contrived by the wit of men, the naming of which, if ye understood their nature, were enough to fill your hearts with horror : but all these fall as far short of the torments ye are to endure, as the wisdom of man falls short of that of God, who is "wise, and will bring evil," Isa. xxxi. 2. Infinite wisdom has contrived that evil, these torments, which are to be the eternal portion of all impenitent sinners. If man can find out a rack, a gridiron, a furnace heated seven times, for tormenting such as he has a mind to punish ; what shall we conceive to be the inventions of infinite wisdom, when it is set on work to contrive a punishment for sinners ? Wisdom, infinite wisdom, well knows the frame of both soul and body ; it knows what faculty of the one or the other are of most exquisite sense, and what torments can work upon them. God shows himself wise, not only in bringing evil upon sinners, but in contriving it, so that it shall surpass what creatures can inflict.

3. Consider, who is the inflietor of these torments ; and this will give us a strange prospect of the misery of those who fall under them. It is God, by his own immediate hand. And from this the apostle represents the misery of such who shall fall under his punishment : "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth to me, and I will recompense, saith the Lord : and again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 30, 31. Should God but give a commission to some creature to torment us, if it were but a flea to leap into the eye, and there to abide, how great would

this torment be ! But much more terrible would your case be, if God should set his wisdom at work, to find out and invent what mixture of torments from creatures would be most exquisite, and then inflict these upon you : this could not but make your case miserable ; since the nature of man is capable to receive comfort or disquietment from every creature : and God knows, not only our frame and make, but that of all the other creatures ; and therefore understands what might contribute most to our disquiet and torment. Should God deal thus, it would make very exquisite torments indeed ; but all this were nothing to his own immediate hand and power. His little finger is more terrible than the united power of all the creatures. As there is no searching out of his understanding, so there is no searching out of his power who is the inflicter, the author of the eternal torments of sinners, “who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” 2 Thess. i. 9. But of this more anon.

4. Consider, what it is that engages infinite power, and sets on infinite wisdom ; and this will give you yet a more terrible representation of your misery. If it were only justice, ye might expect that there might possibly be some abatement made ; but it is anger, fury, the height of fury, that sets wisdom a-work to contrive, and power on work to effect your misery ; and therefore miserable ye must of necessity be, beyond thought or expression. A remarkable scripture to this purpose we have in Nahum i. 2—6. “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth ; the Lord revengeth, and is furious ; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers. Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence ; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation ? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” This is a scripture so very remarkable, that we cannot pass it, without offering you a few observations for clearing it a little. And, (1.) Here ye may see the certainty of sinners being punished. If ever ye escape who continue in your sins, it must either be, because God will not, or because he is not able to punish you : but here ye see, that he is both able and willing, ver. 2. “The Lord is great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.” By no means will he let them go who continue in their impenitency. (2.) Ye see what the punishment of the wicked is : “He will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.” It is expressed by vengeance and by wrath. It is a punishment that is the effect of wrath and revenge, and is to be continued by wrath that is kept in reserve for that purpose. (3.) Ye have that which is the inflicter of this punishment ; it is the great power of God. (4.) Here ye have that which sets this power on work to punish the wicked : it is jealousy ; “Now, jealousy is the rage of a man,” Prov. vi. 34. ; and jealousy in God is the rage of God. (5.) Here you see the awful effects of this

rage of God: "The Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth." The expressions being doubled, intends the signification, and shows the certainty of it. (6.) To represent, if possible, the terribleness of this revenge, in a yet more lively manner, it is added, "The Lord revengeth, and is furious." (7.) The terribleness of this appearance of God against sinners, is further declared by a description of God's power, described in its effects upon the inanimate creatures; as if he had said, Look how terrible the case of sinners is like to be, when God begins to take vengeance on them, and to revenge himself by that power, which by a rebuke drieth up the sea and the rivers, that makes Bashan and Carmel to languish, that melts the hills, and makes the earth to quake. The power of God was put forth in a very remarkable manner, in creating the world; but it is exerted in a more remarkable manner, in punishing the wicked: herein is his power, even the glory of his power, manifested; for ye are to be punished "with everlasting destruction from the glory of his power." The power of man produces greater effects when anger and fury make him strain, as it were, every sinew, and nerve, than when he is cool, and in a sedate composed frame: a Samson in such a case pulled down the pillars of the house. What shall we then conceive will be the effects of God's power, when the heat of anger and fierce indignation and fury excites and acts it? May I not conclude this consideration with that of the prophet in the 6th verse, "Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

3dly, As your loss is great, and the punishment ye are to undergo great, so both these will come upon you in one day; and this is a terrible aggravation of your misery. In a moment all the enjoyments of earth, all the gospel-privileges, and all the hopes of future bliss, which impenitent sinners have, will vanish; and then, even then, at that very instant, will God appear, with his face full of frowns, his heart full of fury, his hand full of power, and all directed towards sinners. It is remarkable, in the sentence at the last day, that with the same breath, at the very instant, they are bid depart God's presence, Matth. xxv. 41. they are likewise sent into everlasting burnings.

4thly, As both will come at once, so they both will come suddenly and surprisingly. This extremely increases your misery. Sudden destruction, and surprising destruction, is, on that very account, double destruction. It may be said, that your damnation lingereth not, 2 Pet. ii. 4. As Christ comes quickly, Rev. xxii. 20. so he comes "in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel," 2 Thes. i. 8. It is sudden, because it comes at a time when it is not expected. Many of you possibly may be putting the evil day far away; and yet ye cannot tell how near it may be to some of you. Who can tell but some who this day are here in God's presence, may be in the pit before next Sabbath? But whether it be so or not, we are sure it is not long to the time when all of you who remain impenitent shall be sent down to the sides of the pit. It is sudden also, because usually this ruin comes when the quite contrary is expected; when "they say, peace, peace, then sudden destruction," 1 Thes. v. 3. When the fool was singing a requiem to his own soul for many years, then that very night

all this misery comes upon him, Luke xii. 20. And this was a great aggravation of his misery. A blow given when the contrary is expected, is doubly stunning.

5thly, As all these things, all the losses, all the torments we have been speaking of, come suddenly and at once, so they all are inevitable. Impenitent sinners cannot by any means escape them. For,

1. God has engaged that sinners shall be punished. He will not at all acquit the wicked. He has passed his word upon it, he "swears in his wrath, that impenitent sinners shall not enter into his rest," Heb. iii. 18. Therefore they may expect that he will be as good as his word.

2. God cannot change: there is no "variableness nor shadow of turning with him," Jam. i. 17. He continues unalterably the same: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6. There is the clear side of the cloud to his own people: and, upon the other hand it may be inferred, "I am the Lord, I change not;" therefore ye who have continued impenitent shall be turned into hell.

3. Ye are not able to ward off the blow. The apostle observes, "That the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man," 1 Cor. i. 25. The weakest effort of God against man is enough utterly to ruin him: "Lo, at the rebuke of his countenance we perish," Psal. lxxx. 16. He can look upon one "that is proud, and abase him;" and his eye can cast about rage and destruction, Job xl. 11—13. If a look can ruin us, much more the breath of his nostrils: "By the breath of his nostrils we are consumed, and by the blast of him we perish," Job iv. 9. Now, if ye be not able to stand against his look, his breath, the blast of his nostrils, far less against his finger, which ruined Egypt by divers plagues, and yet much less against his fist, Ezek. xxii. 13. Whose heart can endure, whose hands can be strong, in the day when those hands that measure the waters in the hollow of them, that span the heavens, comprehend the dust of the earth, and take up the isles as a very little thing, shall begin to crush, and squeeze, and grip him? far less is any able to withstand, when God lays on the weight of his wrath which presseth them hard, as it did Heman; or when he runs upon them, like a mighty giant, with his full force, as a man doth upon his enemy, Job xvi. 14. In this case neither ye yourselves nor any creature can help you; therefore your misery is inevitable.

6thly, As your misery is inevitable, so it is eternal. It is not for a day, or a year, or a month, or an age, nay, nor for millions of ages; but for ever. It is everlasting destruction, everlasting burnings, ye are to dwell with; the worm dies not, the fire goeth not out; the smoke of your torments shall ascend for ever and ever. If one ever will not do it, ye shall have more of them. Here indeed is misery, exquisite misery; and ye would do well to think on your escape.

We have now, for eight Lord's days, insisted upon this subject; and may we not conclude with the prophet, "Who hath believed our report?" Who among you all, who hath been our close hearers upon this subject, are yet convinced of sin? I fear, very few, if any. If there be but one soul among you all, that is awakened to see its sin and misery, the news we are next to bring will be welcome to such; and we hope the Lord will grant them that which they long for.

But to the generality, who are yet fast asleep, and who are as insensible as ever, we shall say a few words. And, (1.) We say to you, Have ye not heard what we have charged you with? And what answer ye to all? I am sure ye can answer nothing that is of weight. And if ye be not able to answer a man like yourselves, think how mute ye will be when ye come before our great Lord and Master, seated upon the throne. (2.) What mean ye, O sleepers? Is it now time to be sleeping, when ye cannot tell but the next moment ye shall sink irrecoverably into the immense ocean of the eternal and intolerable wrath of God? (3.) We cannot tell but this your stupidity may provoke God to that degree against you, that ye shall never have a warning more. How terrible will your case be, if he shall say, Never fruit grow upon these barren and unfruitful sinners any more; or if this day he shall give death a commission, Go to yonder obstinate sinners, whom I by my servants have long been dealing with, in order to bring them to a conviction of their danger, arrest them, bring them immediately to me, and I shall awaken them, but not to their advantage. How will your hearts ache, your ears tingle, and your spirits fail, when ye hear the dreadful sentence pronounced! Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, if ye would evince this, awake in time, and flee to Jesus Christ: hasten your escape, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.

THE
GREAT CONCERN
OF
SALVATION.

PART II.

MAN'S RECOVERY BY FAITH IN CHRIST; OR, THE CONVINCED SINNER'S
CASE AND CURE.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.—Acts xvi. 29, 30, 31.

WHEN we began to discourse to you from Rom. iii. 13. we observed, that there are three questions in which man is principally concerned, What have I done? What shall I do to be saved? What shall I render to the Lord? He who knows how to answer these satisfyingly, cannot miss happiness, if he practise according to their knowledge.

To the first we have returned answer at some length. We have shown you, what ye have done, and what are the consequents of it: "Ye have sinned, and so come short of the glory of God." Now we shall proceed to the second question, What shall we do to be saved? And as the ground of what we are to say upon this head, we have chosen the words read, in which both the question and answer are distinctly laid down.

In the text and context, we have the account of the conversion of the keeper of the prison at Philippi, a city in Macedonia. In which there occur several things very considerable.

1. The person who was converted deserved to have a special mark put upon him. He is a heathen, one of the ruder sort, who was taught blindly to obey what he was put to, without ever inquiring whether right or wrong. He had, but the night before, put the apostles' feet in the stocks, and laid them in chains. When God designs to erect trophies to his grace, he is not wont to single out the moral, the wise and polished sort of sinners, lest they should glory in themselves; but he pitches upon a Mary Magdalen that has seven devils dwelling in her,—a persecuting Saul,—a rude jailor,—“that no flesh may glory in his presence,” 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

2. The place where he is converted, is a prison, a place where ministers were not wont to come, but when they were brought there, that they might be kept from endeavouring the conversion of sinners. When God has a mind to have a sinner, he will not want means to accomplish his

design. He can make a place that is designed to be a mean of suppressing the gospel, subservient to its propagation.

3. The exercise of the apostles under their confinement deserves a remark. A prison is not able to keep them from praising God. Sometimes they have been made to sing in a prison who have been mourning when at liberty. God dispenses the largest, the richest comforts, when his people need them most. He can sweeten a stinking dungeon with the savour of his sweet ointments. He can soften hard chains, by lining them, as it were, with rich supplies of grace. He can relax the closeness of a prison, with his free Spirit, who brings liberty wherever he is. Their hearts are thankful for mercies that they enjoy; and God chooses that time to give them new ones: a strong proof that it is indeed a good thing to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Praise for old mercies brings new mercy with it. The liberal man lives by liberal devices.

4. The occasion of the jailor's conversion is an earthquake which shook the prison, opened the doors, and made the chains fall off. A strange sort of earthquake, indeed, that loosed the prisoners' bonds. When the Lord designs to awaken a sinner, if less will not do it, a miracle shall be wrought.

5. It is worthy our observation, that the first influence of this providence was like to have proven fatal and ruining to the man whose salvation was designed. The first appearances of God for the salvation of sinners may have a very strange influence. They may be so far from bringing the sinner, whose salvation is designed, nearer, that they may seem to put them further off. The jailor would have killed himself.

6. Their frame and deportment under this dispensation is no less remarkable. Though the earth be shaken, their hearts are not so, but are in a blessed rest and repose. They know that God who shook the earth was their God, and gave it a commission not to wrong but to help them. This keeps the Christian calm under shaking providences; the seas may rage, and beat high, but the rock whereon he rests remains firm, and cannot be shaken. And a further proof of their frame we have in their regard to the jailor's safety. Some would have thought it a happy occasion to make an escape; but they take care of the keeper's life, though it should be to the endangering of their own. They do good to enemies, and love them that hate them.

7. Their words to the jailor were remarkable: "Do thyself no harm." They seasonably step in for preventing of sin; they represent the sin so as it might appear the more hateful; they remove the temptation. Herein they leave us an example: if we would prevent the ruin of others, we must step in seasonably. Had they delayed a little longer, the man had been gone past all remedy. If we would discover sin so as to make it appear sinful, we must represent it under those forms which are most likely to engage sinners to renounce it: "Do thyself no harm." Self-preservation is the prime dictate of nature. For one to destroy himself, is to act cross to the very foundation of reason, which leads to the use of all means that have a tendency to self-preservation. And then they remove the temptation. Those who would effectually dissuade sinners from sin, must let them see that all the grounds they go upon are mistakes. The man supposed they had been gone, and that he would be punish-

ed for them : and to evite this imaginary danger, he would have really ruined himself. Thus sinners, to evite imaginary evils, run upon real ones : and to gain imaginary advantages, they lose the true gain. And therefore ministers or others, in dealing with them, should study to undeceive them in this matter : " Do thyself no harm, for we are all here."

Here some may inquire, how they saw him, when it was now night, and he did not see them ? To this I answer, there might be either moon-light, or a candle in the uttermost room, whereby they might see what was done there ; but yet he could not see into the remote corners of the innermost prison where they lay in chains.

8. We are to observe the influence that this check, this seasonable advice, that carried a reproof in its bosom, had upon the man ; it convinced him, it put him into this trembling humble posture we find him in. Here I might observe many very considerable truths. Grace usually begins to work, when sinners have gone to a height, to an excess of sin. While the man is practising a bloody crime, and had murdered himself in design, then grace chooses to lay hold on him. When Saul was grown mad in his persecution, carrying it even to a foreign country, grace takes the opportunity. It doth not bespeak sinners in their lucid intervals ; but, to show its power, it reaches them when at their worst. Again, how mighty a change can a word work, when the Spirit of God concurs ? He whom the earthquake did not deter from sinning, is overcome with a word : a word makes him that put their feet in the stocks fall down at their feet. One word opens the man's eyes to see what he never saw before, it fills his heart with concern about salvation, a thing he had not minded before ; and the fears of that wrath that he little thought of, when he was just going to throw himself fearlessly in its hands by self-murder, now make him tremble, and fall down, cry out, " What must I do to be saved ?" It makes him pay reverence to them to whom he paid none before. He calls them Sirs, a term of honour and respect. A great change indeed ! here are a multitude of wonders. The terrors of God make a stout heart to shake. An unconcerned persecutor lays salvation to heart : and much concern in the heart discovers itself by its effects ; it breaks out in the trembling of the body, and the anxious question in the text.

9. Here it is worth our while to inquire, what he was convinced of ? That the man is convinced of danger, is plain ; that it was not the danger of being punished for letting away the prisoners, is no less plain ; he was now eased of any fears he had of this sort. In one word, he was convinced of his sin and misery. This is plain from the apostle's direction. It were blasphemy to think that they mistook his case : and the event puts it beyond all doubt, that they were not mistaken ; for the cure is no sooner applied than it takes effect. The direction quieted the man's mind ; and this makes it plain, that it was sin and misery that was now in his view ; it was the curse of the law that was pursuing him. We need not spend time in inquiring what sins he was convinced of. That the sin of self-murder was the first, seems probable from what has been already discoursed. When the candle of the Lord fills the bosom of a sinner with light, the first sin that is seen is usually some great sin, and for the most part the sin that was last committed. This sin was just

now committed ; and a monstrous one it was : but though this might be the first, we have no reason to think, that it was this only ; nay, we have reason to think, that the Lord gave the man a broad sight of all his other impieties. When the Lord lights a candle in a sinner's bosom, though some one great sin occurs first, yet he quickly turns to others, and looks through the ugly heart that was never seen before, and sees it full of sins. The Lord tells sinners sometimes all that ever they did, by telling them one sin ; and thus no doubt it was with the jailor. In the,

10. And last place, the posture the poor man is in, when he puts the melancholy question, "What must I do to be saved?" deserves our notice : he is fallen upon his face ; not to worship : this the apostle would not have permitted, as they did not upon other occasions ; but either it is only a civil respect he pays them, after the fashion of supplicants in the eastern countries ; or his trembling legs were not able to support his body ; or partly the one, and partly the other, occasioned this posture.

The next thing that falls under our consideration, is the answer which the apostles give to the jailor's question, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." This contains the substance of the gospel ; and it is this part of the words we principally design to insist on. I shall refer the explication of them, till such time as I have done with what is designed from the question ; because I do not incline to burden you with too tedious an explication of the words.

From the question itself, then, according to the account just now given of its meaning, we shall lay before you, and discourse of this one doctrinal proposition.

DOCT.—"A sinner that is awakened, and soundly convinced of sin, and of misery, its necessary consequent and companion, will lay salvation seriously to heart ; or will with concern put the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

This we see is the first fruit of conviction in the jailor, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This was the immediate result of conviction in the awakened converts, Acts ii. 37. And thus it will be with all who are indeed awakened and convinced of sin, unless there be some such concomitant circumstances as hinder it unnecessarily, of which anon.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall,

I. Premise a few things, for clearing the doctrine.

II. Inquire what this salvation is, which awakened sinners seek after.

III. We shall endeavour to give some account of this concern about salvation, which is the result of conviction.

IV. We shall show, why it is that convinced sinners do lay salvation to heart. Now, of each of these in order.

I. We begin with the first : and for clearing our doctrine, we offer to your consideration a few propositions.

First, Conviction is that sight of sin and misery which sinners get, when the Spirit of God presents them to the soul's view, in their nature, and their necessary connection with one another, together with the sinner's interest and concernment in them : and that in so clear a light, that he cannot but take notice of them. *Ist*, We say the Spirit of God sets sin and misery in their own nature before the sinner's eyes, in a clear

light. There is no man who has not some apprehensions of sin and misery : every one discourses of these things. Education, the dispensation of the word, and converse, have begot some notions of sin in every body's mind : but for any clear discoveries of sin in its nature, few have them. The thoughts of men about sin, are, for the most part, like the thoughts of a man who never saw a toad with a full light : if any man should tell him how loathsome a creature it were ; and withal, in the twilight show him one, when he could not distinguish it from a piece of curious jet lying by it, he would not be much affected with the account, nor would his thoughts of its deformity and ugliness answer the thing itself : but if the sun should dart down a beam of its light upon the loathsome creature, the man would see it, and it may be then his flesh would begin to shrink, and it would fill him with aversion. Just so is it with unconvinced sinners : they see sin, but it is only in the twilight of reason, education, or the external dispensation of the word ; therefore they are not affected with it, nor do they see any peculiar deformity in it, until the Spirit of God let in a ray of supernatural light, and then this very quickly fills the soul with a view of its exceeding sinfulness, which makes the heart begin to shrink at it, and entertain it with aversion. The case is just the same with respect to that misery that is the consequent and companion of sin. Till once the Lord make bare his arm in the sinner's view, and cast in some drops of wrath into his soul, with a certification that these are but drops, he will never be duly affected with it. *2dly*, The Spirit of God in conviction, not only presents sin and misery to the soul in their own nature, but likewise in their connection. God has linked sin and hell together. It always was so, but sinners do not always think so. Groundless apprehensions of God, as if he were all mercy, his patience in forbearing the execution of such as deserve double destruction, the subtile reasonings of Satan, the world, and deceitful lusts, either beget a persuasion, that sin and wrath may be separate, or else a suspicion that it is not certain that they are so linked together as the word says, and ministers aver. But the Spirit of God presents the two, in their dependence and connection, in such a light to the sinner's mind, that he cannot but believe that there is no parting them. *3dly*, The Spirit of God discovers to the sinner how deeply he is concerned in sin, and consequently in that woe that is linked to it. He not only lets him see the toad crawling at a distance, but upon his very clothes. He not only tells him that a certain man has sinned, as Nathan did in the parable, but applies the parable, and says, "Thou art the man." He not only lets the sinner see hell and sin linked together, but also lets him see the one end of the chain, sin, fastened to himself : and all this he discovers with such clearness as obliges the sinner to notice it.

Secondly, We premise this, that there are different degrees of conviction, and that both as to its clearness, extent, and continuance. Upon some persons, some faint rays break in, and open their eyes somewhat above nature's power, letting them see a little more clearly. Upon others there come in full beams, discovering all distinctly, like the sun shining in his strength. Again, some discover only a few ; others get under their view many sins ; the light that shines upon some, is only like a flash of lightning, that fills the house with surprising light, and

is presently gone again; or like the warm blinks of the sun before a shower, which are presently gone, and the sky filled with dark clouds. So various are convictions, as to their degrees of clearness, extent, and continuance. Those convictions which are only faint, and reach only to a few sins, we are not here speaking of, when we speak of a sinner that is thoroughly awakened or convinced.

Thirdly. The issues and consequences of conviction are no less various. Those fainter discoveries of sin, which many meet with in the dispensation of the word, or by awakening providences, usually carry people the length of some faint desires after deliverance; or if they rise higher, it seldom goes further than good resolutions, and there they die. The great flashes of light which dart into the minds of some, very often miscarry, and turn to nothing. It is much with the persons who fall under them, as it is with a man that is awakened by a flash of lightning that darts into his bed: the noise of a thunder-clap, that comes along with it, may make the man start up before he is well awaked; and the light unexpectedly discovering many things, occasions a great confusion in his mind; but presently the noise is over, and the light gone, and then the natural temper of his body, the softness and ease of the bed he lies in, do invite him afresh to sleep; and though by the light that came in, he might see the room full of enemies, he is easily persuaded that all was but the illusion of fancy, and therefore he lays himself down again, and falls fast asleep. Thus it is with many: they hear the thunderings of the law in the preaching of the word; and sometimes the Spirit of God lets in a beam of light into the heart with them, that fills all the soul with fear, discovering the deadly foes that are lodged and secretly entertained there; this makes sinners start up, and it may be cry out; they are awakened out of their security, and raise themselves out of their beds. Now one would think those persons in a great frowardness, and very well; but ere ever ye are aware, they are fast asleep again. "They return with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to the wallowing in the mire;" they fall in their own sins. Why, what is the matter? No degree of conviction can change the heart; and convictions of short continuance do rather fright than soundly awaken: therefore, when the natural inclinations of the heart press on to a little more sleep, and Satan joining issue with this frame of the carnal mind, contributes his part, and endeavours to lay the soul asleep again, it cannot choose but fall asleep; for the flash of light is gone, and the voice of the minister, or providence, by the noise of those solicitations, is banished his mind; and here ends the religion of a great many, who at communions, and some other occasions, appear to be something.

Fourthly. When we speak of a person's being soundly and deeply convinced, and of abiding convictions, we do not mean that there is any one degree of conviction that all come to who are saved; nor do we mean, that there is any degree of conviction which is always followed with faith: for those who are most deeply convinced, may one way or other miscarry, and be lost. They may fall into despair, or they may fall in with false remedies; or they may wear out from under convictions, as some have done, and then turned openly profane. Nor do we intend that every one who believes, before he does so, must lie a long time under conviction: for we see the contrary in the jailor, who presently believes and rejoices,

and so was very soon out from under his convictions. In fine, we only speak of sound and deep conviction, in opposition to those fainter ones which seldom raise the persons that have them above the sluggard's desires, or some ineffectual resolutions : and when we speak of abiding conviction, it is in opposition to those flashes, which are presently gone, and have no other influences than to make half awakened sinners start up, and cry out of their fears, but presently their fears are hushed, and they lie down, and fall as fast asleep as ever

Fifthly, Our doctrine must only be understood of those who are yet in time ; for damned sinners are indeed sufficiently awakened, yet cannot be said to put this inquiry, because they are abundantly convinced, that salvation is not to be expected. And the same is to be said as to those who have split upon the rock of despair, who, though they be not yet in hell, do judge, notwithstanding, their escape impossible. Our doctrine is not to be understood of these persons.

Sixthly, We say not in our doctrine, that convictions, however deep, or distinct, or abiding, issue in salvation, but in a serious concern about it. A person may be concerned, and put inquiries about that which he may never attain. He may ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" who shall never be saved. The young man in the gospel asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" yet, for any thing the scripture makes appear, he did never inherit it. These things being laid down for clearing the doctrine, we now proceed to the

II. Thing proposed, which was, to inquire what that salvation is which awakened sinners are concerned about, and which they seek after. Salvation, as every one knows, signifies a delivery from some one thing or other that is looked upon as dangerous, evil, and hurtful. None are capable of salvation, save those who are either under some such evil, or who are in danger of it ; and then they may be said to be saved, when they are freed from it, or from the danger of it ; when they are delivered from distresses, or when their safety is provided for. This is the plain import of the word. But as it is used by convinced sinners, it takes in more : it not only respects deliverance from evil, but also the enjoyment of God and of good. It is frequently so used in scripture : salvation there is put, not only for deliverance from hell, but for the title to heaven ; and hence believers are styled "heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 14. ; where the apostle, speaking of the angels, says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" In one word, this salvation, that awakened sinners seek after, takes in freedom from sin, and a title to life ; and hence the question in the text takes in other two.

First, What shall I do that I may get pardon of sin ? The sinner sees that it is sin that draws hell upon him ; therefore unless this be pardoned, he despairs utterly of freedom from hell and wrath. The one he sees impossible to be attained, unless he can first get the other. As sin draws on hell, so pardon is linked to salvation from hell ; or rather salvation from wrath is linked to pardon. This we see plainly enough in the carriage of those convinced sinners, Micah vi. 6. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers

of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This is the genuine language of a convinced sinner. Pardon he would have at any rate.

Secondly, The other question that is implied in the text, is that of the young man that came to Christ, Mark x. 17. "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Though pardon of sin, or freedom from wrath, be that which first occurs to an awakened sinner as the object of his desires: yet it is not all that he desires. Salvation would be very incomplete, if eternal life came not in to boot: for man might be forgiven, and yet be turned into nothing, or not admitted into the enjoyment of God. A rebel may be pardoned, and never be made a favourite. That this, as well as the other, will be much upon the thoughts of a solidly convinced sinner, appears from several considerations.

1st, When God himself condescends to direct such, he makes something more than pardon necessary to them, Hos. xiv. 2. There the remnant of the Jews, whom the Lord has a mind to do good to, are told what they must seek from him when they return, and what was necessary in order to their happiness: not only must they have their iniquities pardoned, but they must have gracious acceptance with God, or admission into his family. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Gracious acceptance with God is full as necessary, in order to the content of an awakened sinner, as pardon of sin.

2dly, Awakened sinners, in all ages, have by their practice evidently discovered, that pardon alone did not seem sufficient to satisfy them. They have ever been seeking after some righteousness, wherein they might appear before God, and upon which they might found their title and claim to eternal life, as being sensible that pardon of sin alone could not do it. The Jews who expected pardon from the mercy of God, yet "went about to establish a righteousness of their own, being ignorant of the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3.

3dly, In one word, a convinced sinner is one that is persuaded of a future state, and that the things of this world cannot make him happy: therefore he certainly means the same by this question, "What shall I do to be saved?" that we mean when we inquire, "What shall make us happy?" That every awakened sinner is convinced of a future state, is unquestionable, since the wrath he would so fain be freed from is chiefly in a future state: nor is it less plain, that it is complete happiness he aims at, and that all his trouble arises from the apprehensions of the inconsistency between his happiness and unpardoned guilt. That which only remains to be made appear, is, that pardon of sin alone cannot secure him of eternal happiness; and this is easily proven; for there are two things which pardon doth not, and yet without them both, it is impossible that man should be happy. (1.) Pardon of sin gives man no title, no claim to eternal life and happiness. Innocence in Adam did not give him a title to heaven: can any, then, think that pardon now can give us a title? Eternal life was to be the reward of a course of obedience; nor had innocent Adam any pretensions to it, till such time as he had fulfilled a course of perfect obedience: far less, then, could fallen men have any pretensions to it, if only his sins were pardoned. (2.) Pardon of sin doth not make man meet for "the inheritance of the

saints in light," for converse and intercourse with God. A convinced sinner will see that there is no possibility of access for him to the enjoyment of God, unless there be an entire change wrought upon his nature; for how can two of so very different natures have any mutual complacency in one another? God can have none in the sinful nature of man; nor can the sinful nature of man have any in the holy nature of God: and it is what none can say, that pardon changes the nature of the person that is pardoned.

Now, to sum up what we have said under this head, when an awakened sinner puts the question, "What must I do to be saved?" he just means, How shall I obtain happiness? And this has these three in it: (1.) How shall I get my sins pardoned? (2.) How shall I get a title to eternal life? (3.) How shall I be made meet to be a sharer of the "inheritance of the saints in light?" Unless the mind be fully satisfied as to these three inquiries, it can never think itself secure or happy. That which comes, in the

III. Place, to be inquired into, is the nature of this concern, which is the genuine issue and necessary result of sound conviction. The nature and effect of this we shall unfold to you in the following particulars. And,

First, To lay salvation to heart, or to be concerned about it, seriously imports dissatisfaction with all other enjoyments, so long as the soul is in the dark about this. The man may possibly be possessed of great things in the world, he may have all going there with him according to his wish; but if once he begin to take salvation to heart, he will find content of mind in none of these things. If such a one casts his eye upon his enjoyments, his riches, his honours, his pleasures, he will be sure to conclude, as Haman did upon another account, Esther v. 13. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I am at an uncertainty about salvation." These things cannot satisfy. What are they to a dying man? One that apprehends himself just ready to be swallowed up of the wrath of God, can relish no sweetness in any of these things, till once he be rid of the fears of that. Thus we see it is with the jailor; he, who but a little before was so anxious about the prisoners, that he was ready to have made himself away for fear of their escape, turns now unconcerned about these things: and we hear not, that, while all the doors were open, he made any provision for their security; nor did he receive any satisfaction from understanding that they were all safe. This dissatisfaction is not such a discontent as some fall into who are no ways awakened, which leads them to fret, grudge, and repine, because their lot in a present world is not such as they would have it; no, but it is such a dissatisfaction as flows from a solid persuasion that these things cannot afford happiness, or avert impending and threatened misery, which is so terrible in the eyes of the alarmed sinner.

Secondly, This concern about salvation imports thoughtfulness about the threatened evils, and the means of preventing them. When the soul has once got a view of sin and misery in their native colours, and sees misery threatening it, then this arrests the thoughts; the mind can ply itself to no other thing with pleasure, but only to the ways and means of escape. If other thoughts intrude, they are presently rejected with contempt, as impertinent. The man indeed doth not deny it to be his duty to be concerned about other things; but he thinks it not present duty,

may, he thinks it impertinent for him in his present condition. He is like one that lives in a besieged city: the enemy has made a breach in the walls, and threatens a sudden irruption. In which case, the man knows very well he is obliged to attend to the duties of his ordinary calling and station: yet, in the present exigence, he doth not judge it pertinent to look that way: for if the enemy once enter at the breach, and sack the city, then he for ever loses the advantage of any thing that he gains by his other endeavours; therefore he rather turns his thoughts and contrivances to the reparation of the breach, or the pacifying of the enemy, if he find the place not tenable against him. Just so is it in the case of an awakened sinner: he knows, that if the wrath of God overtake him, he is for ever ruined: therefore his thoughts are wholly bent upon this, how he may be delivered from the wrath to come. Thus we see the Psalmist employed under fears of impending hazard, Psalm xiii. 2. "How long (says he) shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" The apprehensions he was under of danger, put him upon many contrivances how he might rid himself of it. This is always the nature of concern: it arrests the thoughts and keeps men fixed upon that about which the soul is concerned.

Thirdly, This concern has in it always earnestness of desire after salvation. Desire is ever implied in concern of mind; and if a man be concerned how to avert a threatened evil, he desires freedom from it; if he be concerned how to obtain any good he wants, or retain what already he is possessed of, the soul ever immixes its concern with desire. This flows from the very nature of man's soul; for desire is nothing else but the cleaving of the rational soul to that which appears congruous, useful, and necessary to its happiness: so one that is awakened, and sees his hazard, will certainly desire salvation. Hence it is, that we find Christ the Saviour, among the other titles which are given to him in scripture, obtain that famous one, "The Desire of all nations." Hag. ii. 6, 7. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." A Saviour will be desired by such of all nations as are awakened to see their need of him.

Fourthly, This concern about salvation imports a commotion in the affections. A soul full of thoughts about wrath threatened or felt, will have its affections employed about it, according to the account the judgment gives of it. If wrath be in any measure felt, it will fill the soul with grief and sorrow; if it be looked upon as approaching, it will make the man shake with fear; if it be represented as ruining and destructive to the soul, it will raise the highest hatred and aversion; if there be any apparent possibility of escape, it will excite hope in the soul. In one word, in a soul that lays salvation seriously to heart, every one of these passions will take their turn, according as occasion calls for them, or the present exercise of the mind requires and excites them. Were we discoursing of this concern about salvation only as it rests in the mind, we should hold here; but here we are considering it, not only as

it is in its own nature, but as it doth manifest itself in its effects ; and therefore,

Fifthly, We say, where the soul is thus uneasy for want of salvation, thoughtful about it, and going forth in desires after it, this inward temper and frame of the mind will discover itself in words and language. Words are the indications of the thoughts of the mind ; and where the mind is swallowed up of concern about any thing, so as to have all its thoughts engrossed by it, then of necessity the words must intimate so much. A man indeed may be concerned about something of less importance, and this not hold ; but when salvation is laid to heart, then the tongue will be employed as well as the mind. It is storied, that the father's hazard made the tongue-tacked child speak ; much more would its own hazard have done so. Our Lord says, " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matth. xii. 34. ; and indeed where there is very much concern this way, it will not easily be retained ; it will be like a fire that cannot endure to be pent up close in a room, but must have a vent. Thus we see it was with the jailor. That which lay nearest the heart takes the start in discourse : " Sirs," says he, " what must I do to be saved ?"

Sixthly, This inward frame of soul, this concern of mind, leads to the use of means. As the tongue will be employed in inquiring, and the mind in contriving, so the rest of the man will be employed in following after, and using the means that are suited to give relief. Thus we see it was with the jailor, he presently comes to the apostles, and seeks after direction and help from them. No doubt he had heard of them what the possessed damsel, in the 17th verse of this chapter, cries out, that they were " the servants of the living God," who made it their work, " to show men the way of salvation ;" and this makes him address himself to them, as the readiest expedient, the best means to get rid of his fears, and to be solved of the important scruple that now lay so near his heart.

Seventhly, Not only will this concern drive to the use of means, but it will stir up to diligence in the use of them. It will fire the soul with such activity, as will carry it over that natural sluggishness that is in the heart of man, as the natural and genuine fruit of the depraved nature. The unconcerned man, the man that is half awakened, will say with the sluggard, " There is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the streets." He will have a thousand trifling difficulties that will retard him, and keep him back ; but when one lays salvation to heart, he will soon get over all these, and fall close to the diligent use of means, in spite of all difficulties. Thus it was with the jailor : He sprang in, and came trembling, and said, " Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?" He wanted not his own grounds to fear the success of his attempt. What ! might he think, will these men, whom I used so hardly but the night before, deal so kindly to me, as to help me in this miserable pinch ? And will that God, whom I have provoked to be my enemy, render me any relief ? But wrath pursued him so close at the heels, that he durst not stay on any of these accounts, but hazards the issue, be what it will. An awakened sinner is ever brought to the lepers' resolution, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. He sees an inevitable necessity of dying, if he sit still in his present condition, or if he join himself to his old friends ; and, therefore

he will rather choose to venture all upon the mercy of God, and his servants, whom he takes for his enemies, as knowing that there he has a peradventure for life, whereas he has not that same any where else.

Eighthly, This concern will discover itself, by putting the soul in an active and waiting posture, ready to receive any injunction, and to comply with it without delay. One that comes thus to be concerned about salvation, will not stand to dispute the terms proposed, but will greedily wait for, and readily accept of them, if practicable, if possible. Thus we see it is with the poor man in our text. He comes not to make, but accept terms. Sirs, says he, "what must I do to be saved?" as if he had said, I am resolved to scruple nothing ye shall enjoin me; tell me but what I shall do, and here am I ready to accept of any proposal that ye shall, in God's name, make unto me.

Thus we have unfolded unto you the nature of this concern which a solidly convinced sinner will have about salvation, and that from the text. I shall now proceed,

IV. To inquire, Why it is that a solidly awakened sinner does thus lay salvation to heart above all things. An account of this matter, we conceive, may be given in two or three propositions.

First, A strong desire of self-preservation is inlaid in the mind of man, and so closely woven in with his very frame and make, that there is no getting rid of it. Man may as soon cease to be, as cease to desire his own preservation: "No man yet hated his own flesh, but cherisheth it," says the apostle, Eph. v. 29. If that hold in the laxer sense when a man's near relation is called his own flesh, it must hold much more when it is taken in the most strict and close sense, for a man's self.

Secondly, The necessary consequence of this desire of self-preservation, is an utter abhorrence unto every thing that is contrary to nature, or that appears destructive of it; and every thing appears more or less terrible, as it is more or less hurtful to nature. Those things which threaten us with utter ruin, cannot but fill the mind with terrible horror. Hence it is that death is called the king of terrors, because it threatens nature, not with some alterations of less importance, but with entire dissolution. Death of all things is the most opposite to nature; and every other thing is more or less terrible, as it has more or less of death in it.

Thirdly, An awakened soul, a solidly convinced sinner, sees, by that light that God has let into his soul, the wrath of God, the second death, ready to lay hold upon him, and ruin him eternally; therefore cannot but have the greatest aversion possible to it. What will put a man to flight, if not the sight of inevitable death behind him? Then, if ever, will a man flee, when he sees himself brought to that lamentable pinch, that he must either flee or die.

Fourthly, Hence it inevitably follows that such a man who sees himself in danger of utter ruin, in the case he is in, will, nay, of necessity must lay himself out to the utmost, or be concerned above all for salvation from threatened ruin or misery. That principle of self-preservation, and that abhorrence of what is hurtful to nature, which are the springs of all a man's actions, cannot but carry the whole man, and all the powers of the man, to its assistance, when it sees that the whole is endangered.

Having thus shortly discussed what belongs to the explication of this truth, we proceed now to make some practical improvement of it. And among many uses that might be made of it, we shall only make one, and that is of trial.

Is it so, that a soundly convinced sinner will lay salvation to heart above all things else? Then here is a touch-stone whereby ye may try whether or not ye may be indeed convinced of sin, and whether soundly or not: and, in the name of God, we obtest you to put this to trial. For,

First, Unless ye know whether ye be convinced of sin or not, ye cannot know whether ye have got good of all that we have discoursed to you formerly. This we know, that ye are either better or worse by it: for "as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, saith the Lord, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Is. lv. 10, 11. We have spent many sermons on this design of conviction; and now ye are concerned to try, what has been the fruit of them. If ye be not yet convinced soundly of sin, then ye have lost the advantage of all that has been said on this head.

Secondly, Try this fairly, we obtest you; for if ye be not convinced, ye are like to lose the advantage of all that is to be said from the text we are now entering upon. We shall, if the Lord will, from this scripture, hold forth and make offer of Christ Jesus our Lord as the only Saviour of lost sinners; and if ye be not convinced soundly of sin, ye are like to lose the advantage of such offers; for none will welcome or entertain them, save only such as are convinced of sin.

Thirdly, Try, for the Lord's sake, whether ye be convinced of sin or not; for not a few wofully deceive themselves in this matter. They take that general and unconcerned acknowledgment of sin, which every one is led to by custom, education, or some such way, for that solid conviction which is necessary in order to our cordial acceptance of the gospel; and this deceit is of most dangerous consequence, because it lies near the foundation, and a crack there must of necessity be fatal and ruining.

That ye may be at a point in this matter, we shall again run over the several parts of that description we gave of this concern about salvation, which we would now have you to try yourselves by.

But before we enter upon this trial, there is one sort of persons we would set by, as not concerned in it; and that is, such as are openly profane, drunkards, swearers, liars, whoremongers, thieves, and the like. It were gross folly to make a trial of such who have their mark upon their foreheads. Those monsters are so far from being concerned about salvation, that they seem concerned to make their own damnation sure; in as far as they take the plainest, the surest, and straightest course to ruin their own souls. As their damnation lingers not, so it will be just, because they run upon a seen evil. They deserve scarce compassion, who can tell that he "who doth such things is guilty of death;" and yet not only do, "but take pleasure in them that do them." To

endeavour to make a discovery of such persons, by an application of narrow and searching marks, were as if we did busy ourselves in separating huge stones from corn by a fine sieve, when it were much more easily done with the hand. These we set aside in the entry, because their sins go before them into judgment. But besides these notorious sinners, there are others who are no less strangers to solid conviction than they, upon whom nevertheless it is something more hard to prove it. And, therefore, for the discovery of such, we shall now proceed to deal a little more closely with your consciences; and since your concernment in this matter is so great, as we just now did show it to be, we obtest you to be serious in this matter, which is, past all peradventure, to turn either to your eternal advantage, or to your eternal disadvantage.

Ye do all profess yourselves convinced of sin. But now, if it be so, I demand of you, in God's name, have ye ever to this day been concerned about salvation, or, laid it to heart above all things? If ye have not, then to this day ye have never been soundly convinced of sin, whatever your pretences are: and so ye are found liars in this matter, and deceivers of your own souls. If ye say ye have been, or are seriously concerned about salvation, then,

1st, I pose your consciences, and I demand ye may pose this question, Can ye be satisfied with other things, while ye are at an utter uncertainty about salvation? If so, if ye can be well pleased, and have rest in your mind, and live contentedly in an uncertainty about salvation, provided ye be in health of body, and your worldly concerns thrive, then we say, ye have never yet been concerned about salvation, and therefore are yet strangers to that sound conviction, without which none will be content to accept of Christ.

2dly, I pose you in God's name upon it, what thoughts do ye spend upon this subject? Persons who can spend whole days, and nights, and weeks, and never have a serious thought about salvation, they certainly are not laying it to heart. But that I may bring this second question yet a little closer to the conscience, I shall break it into one or two others; and 1. I pose you on it, what thoughts do ye choose? Persons may sometimes be oppressed with thoughts that they entertain the uttermost aversion to; or they may be forced from the thoughts they would for ever desire to dwell upon. A man that is thoroughly awakened, may by the impetuous violence of temptation, or the inevitable occasions of life, be obliged, as it were, sometimes to intermit thoughts of salvation, and entertain thoughts about other things; but when he has leave to make choice, then he will choose to think of salvation. Now, if you choose ordinarily to think of other things than of salvation, then there is no such force upon you, it discovers you unconcerned about salvation, and consequently strangers to that solid conviction that issues always in such a serious concern as we have been speaking of. 2, I further pose you, whether or not do the thoughts about salvation frequently press in upon you, when ye are busied about the ordinary occasions of life, when employed in your ordinary occupations, when ye are working or conversing? If such thoughts are never wont to visit you even then, it is a sad sign that ye do not lay salvation seriously to heart; for certainly that which the mind is much concerned about, will frequently drive the thoughts that way. 3. I put this one question more to you, what

thoughts are those on which your own time is spent? All your time, ye may think, is your own time; but there is a certain portion of time which may be called so upon a peculiar account; such are those seasons wherein we are neither engaged in business nor in diversions, as when we walk alone in the fields, when we separate ourselves in order to rest at night, when we are undressing ourselves, or when we are waking upon our beds in the night-time, or before we engage in company in the morning. Now, it is in reference to such seasons as these that we inquire into your thoughts. If these seasons be not employed in thoughts about salvation, it is a sad sign that ye are not in earnest about it indeed.

3dly, I put this question to you, what are your desires? Man is a desiring creature: he is sensible of self-insufficiency, and therefore is ever desiring and longing after some one thing or other that is suited to his need, or at least which he thinks to be so. Now, what is it that ye desire? Is it salvation? is it Christ? It may be, ye never have a desire after salvation, but when ye are laid upon a sick bed, and fall under fears of death; and even then, where there is one desire for eternal salvation, there are many for freedom from death, for some longer life. Dying David, speaking of that covenant whereby salvation was insured to him, could call it all his desire. "Although my house be not so with God: yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. If your souls do not frequently go out in desires after God, after salvation, it is a shrewd evidence that ye are not concerned about salvation, and consequently that ye are not yet convicted of sin.

4thly, Are your hearts ever affected about salvation? When there is a concern about any thing in the soul of man, it never fails to set the heart a-work, and to fill the affections. Now, surely if ye be in any good degree concerned about salvation ye will be affected. 1. Have ye never any fears of falling short of salvation? "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short." says the apostle, Heb. iv. 1. A heart weighted, and really concerned about salvation, will see many grounds to fear that possibly it may lose salvation at last. The falls of others, the difficulties and opposition in the way of salvation, and its own felt weakness, will ever occasion fear in the heart about this. What one is very concerned to have, he is always feared to lose. 2. Do ye never taste any thing of the anger of God in the threatenings? Those that are concerned about salvation, get such a taste of God's displeasure, as is wont to fill their hearts with grief and sorrow. If ye know nothing of this, it looks very ill, and speaks you not duly concerned about salvation. 3. Do ye never find any thing of shame for sin rising in your heart? If none of these affections be moved, it is a sad but sure evidence that ye are not concerned about salvation, and consequently that ye are not yet solidly convinced of sin.

5thly, Whither runs your discourse commonly? Do ye never speak of salvation? We told you formerly, that when the heart is much concerned about salvation, the mouth will sometimes be employed in speaking about it. Now, where runs your talk commonly? Is there never a word of salvation in your discourse? It is a sad sign that ye never

yet were convinced of sin, that ye never yet laid salvation to heart. Do not think that it will clear you, to tell that ye must conform your discourse to the temper of those with whom ye converse: for I say, 1. Do ye never converse with any body that would be willing to entertain discourse about salvation? If it be so, then I am sure it is choice and not necessity makes it so: this therefore is a further proof of your unconcernedness about salvation, ye slight the converse of such as may help you. 2. Are ye never in a company where ye may lead the discourse? If ye be a master of a family, a parent or any superior, I am sure amongst your inferiors ye may have the leading of the discourse; nay, though ye be servants, ye may sometime or other have as fair a pretence to prescribe to others the subject of discourse, as they have to prescribe to you. 3. If ye shift the evidence of all this, I shall put here a question or two to you, which will, if faithfully applied, make a discovery of you in this matter. And, (1.) Do ye not weary of the company, and of the discourse, that has no respect to salvation? (2.) Is it not a restraint upon you, when ye are kept from discoursing of salvation? If ye be really concerned about it, I am sure it will be so sometimes with you. But I proceed; and, in the

6th Place, I put the question to you, what diligence is there in using the means of salvation? No man that understands either scripture or reason, can think the man concerned about salvation that useth not the means of salvation. Now, because I judge that here we may meet with not a few of you, I shall descend to particulars, and deal plainly with you about this matter. The means of salvation are of three sorts, secret, private, and public. Now, I will put some questions to you in reference to each of them.

I begin with those which we call secret; and of them I shall only name secret reading of the scriptures, and prayer, Lev. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 13.; and in reference to those I shall put two or three questions to you. And, 1. Are ye neglecters of secret prayer? Can ye rise in the morning, and go to your work, and never bow a knee to God? To such we dare say confidently, ye were never yet concerned about your soul's salvation. 2. Are ye ever concerned to know what success ye have in your prayers? Most part deal, I fear by their prayers, as some unnatural parents do by their children; they lay them down to others, and never inquire what becomes of them, whether they die or live: which argues that they are not in earnest in them. We ever find the saints recorded in scripture in earnest about the acceptance and success of their prayers. 3. Are all your secret prayers confined to stated times, it may be morning and evening? Or are you frequently breathing out your desires in ejaculations? If ye neglect these, it is a sad sign ye are not concerned about salvation. Ejaculations, I may say, are the genuine effect of concern about salvation. Here I do not approve of those common forms that people use, to the great scandal of religion and offence of God, 'God save us,' 'The Lord deliver us,' upon every turn. These surely argue want of concern about salvation, and want of due respect to God. Persons duly concerned about salvation, will speak of God with more fear and dread, than is commonly in these expressions, which, as they are used, are certainly a palpable breach of the third command. But when I speak of ejaculations, I mean thereby, affectionate and rev-

erend desires sent up to God about salvation : and I believe there shall scarce be found any really concerned about salvation, who are utter strangers to them. 4. Do ye neglect the reading of the word of God, or do ye not? Such of you as will not be at pains to learn to read the word of God, I can scarce think you in earnest concerned about salvation, since ye neglect so necessary a mean ; at least I think ye have need to be very sure of the grounds ye lean upon, if ye conclude yourselves really concerned about it, while ye neglect this duty. When people are not at pains to read, or take not care to get the scripture read to them in secret, if through age they be incapable, it is a sad sign of want of concern about salvation. I would desire you to consider seriously that one command given by God to his church of old, "He gave them his laws and his statutes, which if a man do, he shall even live in them," Lev. xviii. 5. And he gives them a peremptory command how to use them, Deut. xi. 18—20. "Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes ; and ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up ; and thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Every where they were to have the law of God along with them. How can they be concerned duly about salvation, who neglect the use of that which God commands, and commands so peremptorily, I do not well understand. 5. Do ye take heed to what ye read? Do ye learn to do all the words of the Lord? or do ye endeavour to understand what ye read? In a word, are ye affected with what ye read? or are ye not? If ye be not, then it is evidence enough, that ye are not concerned seriously about salvation : so that ye are not solidly convinced of sin. If ye either neglect the use of these means of salvation, or prove unconcerned as to the success of your use of them, it is undoubtedly sure that yet ye have not laid salvation to heart. I do not indeed say, but even the children of God may be more remiss at sometimes than at other times, but entirely to neglect, or prove unconcerned, they cannot, nor indeed can any that is laying salvation to heart. But,

I come, in the *second* place, to inquire into your diligence in your families. And here I shall say only two things. 1. This concern about salvation will make those who have families careful in the performance of family-duties, and those who are members of families careful in attendance upon them. When once a man is serious about salvation, he will be sure to set about those duties which may any way contribute to his safety and establishment. 2. When a person is once concerned about salvation, then there will some regard be had to the success of such duties, that is, such a one will take care to know whether he is better or worse by the duties he follows. Now, bring these two home to your consciences : and let me ask you, what conscience ye make of performing or of attending to these duties? If ye either neglect them, or turn indifferent as to the success of them, past all peradventure, ye are in a dangerous condition. A man that sees himself in a state of misery, and thinks seriously of salvation, will not be content to trifle in these duties which have so immediate, so remarkable, an influence upon his eternal

condition. If he neglects them, then he lies open to the fury of God which, according to the prophet Jeremiah's prayer, will fall upon the "heathen, and the families that call not upon the name of God," Psal lxxix. 6. Jer. x. 25. If he prove remiss, he falls under the woe denounced against the deceiver, Mal. i. 14. "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." And he thinks his case hard enough already, without the addition of that new wrath.

The last sort of means of salvation are such as are called public. A concern about salvation will discover itself in reference to these many ways; of which we shall only name two or three. 1. It will make us lay hold upon every opportunity of this sort. A man that is in great danger, and knows himself to be so, will be sure to frequent those places which promise him safety. 2. It will be a satisfaction and matter of joy to him that there are any such opportunities, and that his case is not entirely desperate and hopeless. 3. When he comes to them, he will still have salvation in his eye, and will greedily look what aspect every thing he hears and sees has upon his own salvation. 4. He will not be satisfied with any thing, unless he see how he may be saved. Now, is this your carriage when you pretend to be concerned about salvation? Do ye with satisfaction embrace every opportunity of the ordinances? Do ye "joy when they say to you, Let us go up to the house of God?" Do ye keep your eye fixed upon salvation? Or, are ye more intent upon other things? This is a good way to know whether ye be concerned about salvation or not. Now, to conclude this mark, I say, that if ye do neglect, or carelessly use the means of salvation, whether private, secret, or public, it discovers your unconcernedness about salvation. A man that has fallen into the sea, and is in hazard of drowning, will haste towards every thing that may contribute to his safety; and when he comes near the shore, he will not spend much time in observing the form of the shore, but its usefulness to him: So a man that sees himself in danger of sinking in the wrath of God, will look to all the means of salvation; and that which his eye will fix principally upon, will certainly be their usefulness to himself. That duty, and that way and manner of performing it, that levels most directly at his salvation, will please him best. I shall, in the

7th and last place, put this one question more home to you for trial. Will small and inconsiderable difficulties make you lay aside thoughts of salvation, or the use of the means? If so, it is a sad sign that ye are not yet arrived at that concern which is the fruit of sound conviction.

One that is soundly convinced of sin, and is thence induced to lay salvation to heart, will not stop at any thing he meets with in his way: for he can see no lion in the way that is so terrible as that wrath of God he sees pursuing him; nor can he hear of any enjoyment, to make him turn back again, that is so valuable as that salvation he seeks after. All hindrances that ye can meet in the way to heaven, I mean such as are proposed for rational inducements to persuade you to give over, may be reduced to one or two. The tempter must either say, Desist and quit thoughts of salvation; for ye will run a great hazard if ye step one step further; or if ye will desist, ye shall have this advantage or the other. But a solidly convinced sinner has two questions that are

enough for ever to confound and silence such proposals. (1.) Ye tell me, that if I hold on, I shall meet with such a hazard ; I must be undervalued, reproached, opposed, and, in fine, meet with all the ill treatment that the devil, the world, and sin give me ? But now, Satan, I have one question to propose to you here ; Are all these, taken together, as ill as damnation ? if not, then I will hold on. But whereas, O tempter, (2.) Ye say, that I shall get this pleasure or the other, if I desist and quit the way that I have espoused ; I ask you, Is that pleasure as good as eternal salvation ? or will it make damnation tolerable ? These two questions make a soul that is really concerned about salvation, hold on in the diligent use of means. A man, if ever he run, will then run, when he has happiness in his eye, and misery pursuing him : and thus it is with every sinner that is thoroughly awakened, and lays salvation to heart ; therefore it is no wonder such a one refuse to be discouraged, or give over, whatever he meets with in his way. But now, are there not among you, not a few who will be startled at the least difficulty, and quit thoughts of the means of salvation, for very trifles ? This is a sad evidence that ye are not indeed solidly convinced of sin.

Now, I have shortly run through these particulars ; and, in the conclusion I inquire of every one of you,

1st, Have ye applied these marks to your own consciences, as we went through them ; or, have ye carelessly heard them, as if ye had no concernment in them ? To such of you as have not applied them, I say only, in so many words, (1) If ye will not judge yourselves, ye shall surely be condemned of the Lord. When persons will not try their case, it is a sure sign that matters are not right with them. (2.) We may safely enough determine, that ye are unconcerned about salvation, and fast asleep in your sins, nay, dead in them. (3.) Ye will come to such a sensible determination of your estate, ere it be long, as will force you to think upon these things with seriousness, but not with satisfaction. But to such as have been applying these marks as we went along, in the

2d place, I propose this question, Do ye find upon trial that ye have indeed been laying salvation to heart above all things, or that yet ye are not in earnest about it ? I beg it of you, nay I obtest you, to deal impartially with your own souls ; and I am sure ye may come to understand how it is with you. This question, if fairly applied, will divide you into two sorts. 1. Such as are not laying salvation to heart, and so have not been convinced of sin. 2. Such as are really concerned about salvation, and are with the jailor, saying, " What must I do to be saved ? "

I shall conclude this doctrine in a short address to these two sorts of persons ; and then proceed to the apostle's answer to the jailor's question.

I begin with the first. Such of you as are not convinced of sin, and therefore do not lay salvation to heart. Are there any such miserable wretches here, after all that has been said ? No doubt there are ; and I fear that the most part are such. To you I say,

1. Whence is it that ye are not convinced of your sin and misery, which has been so plainly, and at so great length, inculcated upon you ? Surely it must be upon one of three accounts ; either, first, Ye have not heeded what has been said ; or, secondly, Ye have not believed it ; or,

thirdly, Ye have some one false defence or other, unto which ye lean. Now, because this is a matter of no small moment both to you and us, we shall here discourse a little of these three. It is of great moment to you to be undeceived here, because a deceit here will ruin you eternally; and it is of great moment to us, because, unless we get you undeceived in this matter, we lose all our pains in holding forth Christ, and the way of salvation by him. Persons who are not convinced of sin, will, past all peradventure, make light of Christ, and refuse him.

(1.) Then, I shall speak a word to such as have not taken heed to, or regarded what has been said for their conviction. I make no doubt but there are some such here, whose hearts have been, with the fool's eyes, in the corners of the earth, and who have scarce been thinking all the while what they were hearing. Your consciences can tell you whether this has been your practice; and if it has, then I say, 1. It is indeed no wonder that ye do not lay salvation to heart, that ye are not convinced of sin; since ye will not hear what will serve for conviction, and is designed that way. 2. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?" Has God condescended so far to you, that he has sent his servants to you, and ye will not be at the pains to give them a hearing? How do ye think would your master or your ruler take it, should ye deal thus by him? If when he were speaking to you, either himself or by his servant, ye were turning away your ear from him: would he not resent it highly? And has God any reason to bear with an indignity at your hand, that your master would not suffer? 3. Ye have reason to admire that he has not turned you before now into hell. This would effectually have convinced you, and repaired the lesed honour, the injured glory of God. 4. I say to you, ye have lost an opportunity; and none can assure you that ever ye shall have the like again. God may give over striving with you, and never more attempt your conviction: and woe to you when he departs from you. 5. I say, ye have slighted God's command which enjoins you to "take heed how ye hear, and what ye hear," Mark iv. 24, Luke viii. 18. It is not for nothing that our Lord enjoins both to observe the matter and manner of hearing: as he gave those commands, so he will take care that they be not slighted. He will avenge himself of those who despise his authority in them. And therefore I say, 6. If ye refuse a little longer to hear, then it is like, nay, it is certain, he will speak to you himself, and make you take heed, if not to what you hear, yet to what ye shall feel, to your eternal disquietment: he will speak to you in wrath, and vex you in his hot displeasure. A remarkable scripture to this purpose we have, Ezek. xiv. 7. "For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and sets up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me, I, the Lord will answer him by myself!" A set of people there was in this prophet's days, who were his hearers; and they came under pretence of hearing or inquiring into the mind of God; but they were but mocking God as ye have done, and did not regard what was said to them by the prophet. Well, the Lord will no more deal with them by the prophet, but will take them into his own immediate hand, and deal with them by himself. The words in the first language run thus: "I the Lord: it shall be

answered to him in me. I will not let any answer him but myself." As if he had said, My servants are too mild to deal with such wretches as mock me; I will not answer them any more with words: I will give over speaking to them, and will answer them by deeds, and that not of mercy, but of judgment. Now, think on it in time, how terrible your condition is like to be, if God shall say to you, I have spoken to these wretches, and laid their sin before them, by my servants; but their hearts have been so taken up with their idols, that they have not heeded them: I will therefore speak to them by terrible deeds, "I will set my face against them, and will make them a sign and proverb; and I will cut them off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord," as it follows in verse 8 of that fore-cited chapter. I leave you to think upon these things, and proceed.

(2.) To speak to such as therefore are not convinced, because they did not believe what they have heard upon this head. I make no doubt that there are not a few such here: nay, I may say, that all who are not convinced and awakened to a serious consideration of their state and condition, owe their security and unconcernedness to this woeful unbelief, that is a sin pregnant with all other sins, that alone has in it whatever is hateful to God, or destructive to the soul of man. To such as have heard, but do not believe, we say, 1. Ye have not refused our testimony; but the testimony of God, who cannot lie; and he that believeth not the record of God, hath made him a liar; than which none can charge a greater impiety upon the holy God, who values himself upon this, that he cannot lie, which is peculiar to God only; for however there be of the creatures that do not lie, yet of none of them can it be said, that they cannot lie; this is God's sole prerogative. 2. Ye have shut your eyes upon clear light. Your sin and misery have been set before you in the clearest light, the light of God's word. The matter has not been minced, but ye have been plainly and freely dealt with upon this head: therefore ye need to look well to yourselves, that God strike you not judicially blind. This he is frequently wont to do to those who resist clear light; he leaves them to Satan, the god of this world, to blind their eyes, and gives them up to "strong delusions to believe lies, that they may all be damned that believe not." 3. We did call in heaven and hell, the Creator and the whole creation, as witnesses of that certain and sad truth, that man has "sinned and come short of the glory of God." I know not one witness more but sense; and since no less is like to do, take care that sense of misery do not convince you of its truth. Hell will make you, even the most incredulous of you, believe and tremble too, as the devils and damned do.

(3.) I come now to discourse those who therefore are not convinced of sin, or induced to lay salvation to heart notwithstanding the pains taken on them, because they have defended themselves against the force of the truths proposed, by some shifts, which upon occasion they use for quieting or keeping quiet their consciences. Of this sort I fear there are many, too many here present; and therefore I shall deal more particularly and closely with such. We have laid before you all our sin and misery; but few are yet awakened; few say with the jailor in the text, "What must I do to be saved?" Whence is it so? Has not sin been laid open to your view? Has not the sad but certain truth, that "all

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," been plainly demonstrated from many incontestable evidences? Nay more, has not the particular concernment of every one of us in this truth been plainly unfolded? Yes, no doubt: but whence is it, then, that the most part are so secure? that there is so little fear of hell and wrath, and damnation, amongst us? Are there none here who have any reason to fear it? No doubt, there are many, too many such amongst us: but here it lies, when the truth is pressed home upon the conscience, we have a strange way of putting divine truths away from us. Now, I shall lay open the nakedness of these fences, behind which most of us screen ourselves from convictions.

1. When sin and misery are discovered, some there are, amongst the hearers of the gospel, who take with the charge. If we say to them, as Nathan did to David, in the application of the parable, Thou art the man, thou art the woman, that hast sinned, that art in danger of the eternal wrath of God. O! then, answers the sinner, it is very true what ye tell; I have sinned; and, God be merciful to us, we are all sinners; I hope God will be merciful to me. And there the wound is skinned over as soon as made, and the person is healed. This is the refuge to which many of you betake yourselves. But we shall pursue you to the horns of God's altar, and fetch you down thence. Ye say, God is merciful. I say, (1) It is very true, he is so. The Lord has long since proclaimed his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and he delights in such as hope in his mercy," Psal. cxlvii. 11. But, (2.) Notwithstanding of the mercy of God, there are but few that shall be saved, Luke xiii. 23. Now, who has told you, that ye shall be among that few? Ye say, ye hope to be among that few who shall find mercy; and I fear ye shall not. Now, whether are your hopes or my fears best grounded? I can give some account of my fears; but I doubt if ye can give any of your hopes. I say, I fear that many of you be damned; for, as I said before, there are but few that shall be saved; and these few are all penitent sinners, who have been convinced of sin and misery, and have laid salvation to heart above all things, and have accepted of Christ upon the gospel-terms. Now, it is obvious that there are but very few of you of this sort; and our Lord hath said positively, "That he who believeth not, shall not see life, but shall be damned." Now where are the grounds of your hopes? Ye say, God is merciful: and I answer, he is just also; and his justice has as fair a plea against you, as his mercy has for you. Ye say, he has saved some sinners, and therefore hope he will have mercy upon you. I answer, he has damned more than he has had mercy upon; and therefore he may deal so with you too. O but, say ye, I cannot think that God will be so cruel as to damn me. I answer, what more cruelty will it be to damn you, than to damn the heathen world? What more cruelty to damn you, than to damn the generality of unbelievers, which make the far greater part of the hearers of the gospel? In fine, is it cruelty to damn you, who have innumerable sins, when it was none, God thought it none, to send so many angels into hell for one sin? Is it cruelty to punish you, who have neglected the means of salvation, when others have been damned that never had them? Who would say the prince were cruel, or wanted mercy, who caused execute the threat-

ened punishment against obstinate offenders? Now, where are all your hopes from the mercy of God? I tell you there are thousands this day in hell, who have been ruined by such presumptuous hopes of mercy; and I fear there are many more who shall be so, ere all be done.

2. Others, again, when beat from this defence, betake themselves to another not one whit better: O, say they, we are in no danger, for we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I answer, (1.) It is very true, they who do believe are indeed out of all hazard. But I say, (2.) Are ye sure ye believe? Many have been mistaken; and are ye sure that ye are in the right. The foolish virgins thought themselves believers, and, it may be, went a further length than ye can pretend to have gone; as ye may see, if ye look to the parable, Matth. xxv. 1. They had professions, they had lamps; upon the bridegroom's call, they awake, and endeavour to trim their lamps to make them shine; they are convinced of the want of oil, and endeavour to get it; and yet were eternally shut out from the presence of God. Now, with what face dare any of you pretend to believe, when ye come not up that length that we have just now let you see others come, and yet perish? Are there not among you, who will say ye believe, and yet can get drunk, can swear, mock religion, and entertain a heart-hatred at such as go beyond you in strictness, can ridicule them, and call them hypocrites? I fear there may be some such amongst you. I tell you, ye have no faith but such as may go to hell with you. "Faith works by love;" it is a heart-purifying grace, and discovers itself by a course of obedience, according to that of the apostle James, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works," James ii. 18. (3.) Ye say ye believe. When did ye believe? Did ye always believe? Yes, we always did believe. Say ye so? O horrid ignorance! Ye say, ye did always believe. I say, ye did never to this day believe; for we are not born believers, but unbelievers; and if ye think that ye did always believe, it is proof enough, that to this day ye are strangers to the precious faith of God's elect. I shall not at present insist in discovering the folly of such a pretence to faith, because I shall have occasion, if the Lord will, afterwards to discourse more at length of faith, and of the difference betwixt it and those counterfeits of it whereon many do rely. Only I say at present that where faith is, it will lead to concern about salvation, and will lay hold upon the discoveries of sin; and that faith which is not endeavouring to get the soul in which it dwells more and more convinced of, and humbled for sin, is to be suspected.

3. When sin is held forth, and the law preached, then others will shelter themselves under the fig-leaf of their own blameless walk. Come to some of those who have all their days lived in a state of estrangement and alienation from God, and pose them, when they lie upon a sick-bed, or a death-bed as to their state, they will say, they hope all is well; they shall be saved, they never did any body ill; and therefore they never feared the wrath of God. Wo's me that there is any so grossly ignorant, in a church that has been blessed with more clear and satisfying discoveries of God's mind and will, than most churches in the world. Ye say, ye have done no man any injury, and therefore ye will be saved. I answer, ye have injured God, and therefore ye will be damned. Ye say, ye have injured no man. I answer, ye understand

not well what ye say, otherwise ye should not have the confidence to talk at the rate ye do. (1.) Ye have injured all with whom ye have conversed, in whom ye are concerned, in as far as ye have not laid out yourself in paying the debt ye owe them. Love is a debt we owe to all, Rom. xiii. 8; and he that has never evidenced his love to them, in a serious concern about their salvation, is extremely injurious to them, in as far as he detains from them that which is unquestionably their due; and, past all peradventure, he that was never serious about his own salvation was never really concerned about the salvation of others; and therefore has detained from them what was their undoubted right. (2.) Didst thou never see thy brother sin? No doubt thou hast. Well then, didst thou reprove him? I fear not. Yea, many of this sort of persons can, it may be, see their own children, wives, servants, and nearest relations, commit gross acts of sin, and yet never reprove them. Is it not so with many of you? I am sure ye cannot deny it. Well, is not this a real injury done to the persons ye should have reprov'd? It is a hating them in your heart. God himself says so; and sure his judgment is according to truth, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any ways rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." In fine, with what confidence dare ye say, ye have done no man any injury, when, by a tract of sin, ye have been doing the utmost ye could to bring down the wrath of a sin-revenging God upon yourselves, and upon all who live with you in the same society?

4. Others, when pursued by the discoveries of sin, get in behind the church-privileges, and think there to screen themselves from the wrath of God. Thus it was with the wretches spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah, in that 7th chapter of his book; they did steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense unto Baal. Well, the Lord threatens them with wrath, bids them amend their ways and their doings: but they sat still secure and unconcerned, never affected either with the discovery of sin, or with threatenings of wrath. What is the matter? Have the men no sense of hazard at all? They could not altogether shut their eyes upon the clear discoveries the prophet made of their sins to them, or of that consequential misery he did threaten them withal; but they sheltered themselves behind their church-privileges, and they cry out to him, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," ver. 4. And I make no doubt but it is so with some of you. It may be, ye reason as Manoah did in another case, "If the Lord designed to damn us, he would not have given us ordinances as he has done." Now, I only offer two or three things that will sufficiently expose the weakness of this defence or hiding-place. And, (1.) I say, ye may indeed reason thus: God has established gospel-ordinances, the signs of his presence amongst us; therefore he will save some. He will not bring the means of grace without doing some good by them. Yet, (2.) I say, ye cannot thence infer, that he will save you: for, [1.] Many who have had the gospel-ordinances have been damned. [2.] It is not the having, but the improving of them, that saves any. [3.] To lean upon them is the worst misimprovement of them possible; and therefore take care that ye trust not in lying words, saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."

5. Others, finding no shelter from their convictions here, betake them-

selves to their good duties. We tell them, they are sinners, and lay open to their eyes their miserable and wretched condition and state; they turn their eyes to their duties, and, like the Pharisee spoken of by our Lord, Luke xviii. 11. they will stop the mouth of conscience, with an enumeration of their performances, whereby they excel others. True it is, will such a one say, I have sinned; but, on the other hand, I am not guilty of gross outbreakings, and scandalous sins; nay, more, I am much and frequent in the performance of the duties of religion, I pray, I fast, I communicate, and a great many other things I do; and therefore I hope to get to heaven, notwithstanding all my sins. O how natural is it for a man to prefer a defenceless hiding-place of his own contrivance, to the impregnable city of refuge contrived by infinite wisdom and grace; the home-spun robe of his own, to the heaven-wrought robe of Christ's righteousness? Here many of you hide yourselves; I pray, I read, I seek unto God, and therefore all is well. A sad conclusion! To this plea I answer, (1.) If ye should dissolve in tears, pray till your knees grow into the ground, and give all ye have in alms, and fast every day, all this will not atone for one sin. (2.) Your best duties do but increase your guilt. This the church well saw, Isa. lxiv. 6. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (3.) Good duties, when rested on, have damned many, but never did, nor ever shall, save any. To lean to them, is to say to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; a sin that the Lord forbids and abominates.

6. Another sort of persons, when convictions get hold of them, and their sin and misery are plainly and clearly discovered to them, get in behind their good resolutions, and thereby they shelter themselves. They resolve to consider of this matter at a more convenient season, like Felix, who dismissed Paul, when once he came to deal closely with him, and promised him a hearing afterwards. So do many, when they are almost convinced, they dismiss convictions, and promise to hear them afterwards. Now, I shall address myself to such in a few serious expository questions. And, (1.) I inquire at you, is the consideration of sin and misery, and of your escape from it, a business to be delayed? Is there any thing that ye can be concerned about that deserves to be preferred to this? Is there any hazard like damnation? any mercy comparable to salvation from the wrath of God? If a man gain a world, and lose a soul, is he profited by the exchange? (2.) Who is better judge of the most convenient occasion, God or you? He has determined the present opportunity to be the best: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." (3.) When art thou resolved to take under serious consideration thy sin and misery, that now thou shiftest the thoughts of? Ye must surely say, that it will be some time after this. But now I ask you, what certainty have ye of such a time? and what certainty have ye, that ye shall then have the means that are necessary in order to this end? I believe ye dare not say, that ye are sure of either. (4.) Sure I am, some who in the same manner have made many fair promises and resolutions, have thereby cheated themselves out of their souls. But,

7. Another sort get in behind their own ignorance, and think to shelter themselves there. They promise themselves safety, though they be not concerned about salvation, because they are but ignorant. God, say they, may deal severely with others that know better things; but for me,

I hope he will have mercy upon me, because I know no better. With what astonishing confidence have we heard some plead this! Ye say, ye are ignorant, and therefore God will have mercy on you. I say, ye are ignorant, and therefore God will have no mercy upon you, Isa. xxvii. 11. Ye are ignorant; but whose fault is it? Has not God given you the means of knowledge? Has not the light of the glorious gospel shined clearly about you? Have not others got knowledge by the use of the very same means which ye have neglected and slighted? This is a common excuse for sins, but a most unhappy one as ever any meddled withal; for (1.) God has expressly told us, that ignorant people shall be damned, 2 Thes. i. 8, 9. (2.) He has told us that ignorance will be the ground of the sentence. This is the condemnation of ignorant sinners, that they love "darkness rather than light," John iii. 19. Nor will it excuse you to tell that ye want time; for [1.] All other things should give place to this: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof," and other things will come in their own room and place. [2.] Others have had as little time as ye have, who yet have taken care of their souls, and have got the knowledge of God. [3.] Ye lose as much time upon trifles, or doing nothing, as might bring you to a competent measure of the knowledge of these things which do belong to your peace, were it but frugally managed; so that this will be found to be a weak defence, try it who will. And yet here a great many shelter themselves, and that two ways. (1.) Hereby a great many are not capable to understand what we speak to them about their sin or their danger, and so we have no access to them to convince them. (2.) Others do think, that their ignorance will atone for their other faults; and this is a fancy so deeply rooted in the thoughts of many, that nothing is like to cure them of it, till the appearance of the Lord Jesus, for their destruction who know not God, do it.

8. There is one defence more whereby some put off convincing discoveries of sin; and that is, by comparing themselves with others. When it is borne close home upon their consciences that they are in an estate of extreme danger, then they say, Well, one thing I am sure of, it is like to fare no worse with me than with others; and if I be damned, many others will be so besides me. O desperate and yet common defence!

Thou sayest, if thou be damned, then many others are like to be so. Well, it shall indeed be so; many shall indeed perish eternally, as ye heard before. But, (1.) What will this contribute to your advantage? I make no doubt but company will contribute exceedingly to the blessedness of the saints above: but I cannot see what solace or comfort the damned can have from their companions; nay, past all peradventure, this will enhance their misery, their case being such as can admit of no alleviation. (2.) Knowest thou, O sinner! what thou sayest when thou talkest at that rate? It is plainly to say, I will hazard the issue, be what it will; than which nothing can be more extravagant and foolish. Art thou willing to hazard eternal wrath? Can ye dwell with everlasting burnings? Can ye dwell with devouring flames? If there be any such a one here, as is resolved to hold on at this rate, and hazard the issue, I have a few questions to put to him. Is there any thing in the world worth the seeking after, that ye would desire to be sure of? If there be any such thing, then I pose you on it, if there be any thing

comparable to salvation? If ye say, there is, then I inquire further, is there any thing that will go with you after this life is done? Is there any thing that will make up your loss, if ye lose your souls? what will be able to relieve you under the extremity of the wrath of a sin-revenging God? Again, when ye say, ye will hazard the issue, then I desire to know of you, do not ye think it as probable that ye shall be damned, as that ye shall be saved? Sure ye have reason to think so indeed. A person so little concerned about salvation, must think God has a very small esteem of salvation, if he throw it away upon such as care not for it. Finally, since ye are likely to be damned in the issue, have ye ever thought what damnation imports? I believe not. I shall only refer you to that short account of it, which the final doom of impenitent sinners gives of it, in Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

I cannot now enter upon the consideration of many other pretences, whereby sinners shelter themselves from convictions; only I wish ye may rivet upon your hearts three truths, which will help to preserve you from laying weight upon them. (1.) Be persuaded, that there are but few that will be saved. Christ has said so, and who dare give him the lie? (2.) Believe it, they who shall be saved, shall not be saved in an easy way. The "righteous are scarcely saved," 1 Pet. iv. 18. (3.) Ye are to endeavour a solid conviction, that there is no salvation for you, but in the gospel-way, Acts iv. 12. Understand and believe these three truths, and this will be a mean to preserve you from a reliance upon things that cannot profit. And this for the first word we designed to such of you as are not convinced of sin and misery.

2dly, To such of you as are not yet awakened, as are not yet convinced of your lost and undone state. I say, ye have reason to fear that ye shall never be awakened and convinced. There is ground to fear that Christ has said to you, "Sleep on;" and if it be so, then the thunders of the law, the still and calm voice of the gospel, the most sweet and charming providences, yea, the most terrible threatenings of providence, shall never be able to open your eyes, or make you consider and lay to heart the things that belong to your peace; but ye shall sleep on in your security, till the wrath of God come upon you to the uttermost. But it may possibly be, that some whose case this is shall say or think, or at least carry, as if they thought there was no danger of this at all. But I assure such, whatever their thoughts may be, there is great hazard of this. For,

1. God has taken much pains upon you already, to bring you to a sense of your sad state and condition; but he has not dealt so with others. He has not dealt so with many of the heathen nations; he has not dealt so with many who have been taken away suddenly after their refusal of the first offer of the gospel; he has not dealt so with a few others, who have had the gospel-light quickly taken from them, upon their refusal of it. As for the way of God's dealing with the heathen, there is no place to doubt of it; and that the Lord has not dealt so with, or been at so great expense, either of time or means, with others, is plain in your own experience. Tell me, O sinners! have not many been snatched away by death from the advantage and use of the ordinances since the Lord began to deal with you in order to your convic-

tion? Sure, few of you can deny it: and that the Lord did allow others a shorter time of the ordinances, is no less plain from manifold evidences, both in scripture and in the experience of the church in all ages. Ye have had more time than Capernaum and many other places where Christ preached, in the days of his personal ministry upon earth.

2. Ye have reason to fear this terrible issue, if ye consider the way that the Lord has taken with you. He has not rested in a general discovery of either your sin or danger, but has dealt particularly with every one of you, as it were by name and surname; he has spoken particularly to you by his word and by his providences. In his name we have dealt particularly with young and old of you; and by his providences he has been no less particular. What person, what family, has not, either in themselves or in their relations, felt the stroke of God's hand? which tells all upon whom it lights, that they "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." I believe there is scarce one in this house who has not smarted this way. So that scarce is there one amongst us who has not withstood particular dealings of God for his conviction: and this is a sufficient ground to fear that we may never be convinced, since all the ways that God is wont to take, are either general, when he deals with a person in common, by a proposal of such things as lay open the sin and misery of all in general; or particular, when he makes a special application of the general charge, either by his word, or by his providence, and says, as Nathan did, "Thou art the man:" and what can be done more for your conviction in the way of means?

3. He has not only used these ways and means mentioned, but has waited long upon you in the use of the means, even from the morning of your day till now. Many, if not all of you, have had precept upon precept, and line upon line, here a little and there a little. Christ has risen up early, and has dealt with you, by sending one messenger after another, one preaching after another, one providence after another, and yet ye are not convinced and awakened. This suggests great grounds to fear the issue, if it be considered,

4. That the Spirit of God, though he may long strive with sinners, yet will not always strive with them, Gen. vi. 6. "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh;" as if the Lord had said, I have long dealt with these men, by an awakening ministry, by awakening dispensations, by the inward motions of my Spirit, by checks of their own conscience, to convince them of their sin and danger, and to reform them: but now I find all means ineffectual, they are entirely corrupt; therefore I will convince them no more. I will spare them till they fill up their cup, and be fattened against the day of slaughter; but will never more convince them, or endeavour their conviction. And who can tell, but the Lord has this day pronounced the like sentence against the unconvinced sinners of Ceres or some of them? Yonder is a people with whom I have long striven, by the word, by providence, by motions of my Spirit, and by secret checks of conscience, and yet they are not awakened, are not convinced: therefore I will strive no longer with them; I will either take them away with a deluge of wrath, as I did the old world; or I will take my ordinances from them, as I have done from other churches; or I will give

my servants a commission to make their ears dull of hearing, their hearts fat, and their eyes blind; and I will pronounce the barren fig-tree's curse against them. And that all this is not a mere empty bug-bear, set up on purpose to fright you, will appear evident, if it be considered,

5. That this is the stated measure, the ordinary way, that the Lord has laid down, for proceeding with persons in that case: as ye will see if ye turn over to that terrible scripture, Heb. vi. 7, 8. "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Here is the stated and ordinary rule of God's dispensation with sinners, who live under a gospel-dispensation: and that both with such as improve and with such as misimprove it. The way that God takes with the first sort, the improvers of it, is this: He gives them the means, his word and ordinances, which, like the rain, come down from heaven, and have a fructifying efficacy, when they fall upon good ground; and, upon their bringing forth good fruit, called fruit that is meet for the use of him that dresseth it, he blesseth them. On the other hand, we have the carriage of God toward the rest, and their carriage toward him, plainly enough represented unto us; which I shall set before you in a few particulars. (1.) God gives them, as well as others, frequent showers; he gives them sometimes the means, and that in great plenty. (2.) The generality of them use the means; but the one sort and the other is supposed to drink in the rain; for there is no doubt, that those who openly reject the counsel of God against themselves, as the Pharisees and Scribes did of old, Luke vii. 30. shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire. (3.) Though this sort of persons we are now speaking of drink in the rain, as did the other, yet herein are they differenced, they bring not forth fruit meet for the use of him by whom they were thus watered; but, on the contrary, they bring forth briers and thorns: That is plainly, the discoveries of sin did not convince them, the discoveries of danger did not awaken them, the influences of grace did not quicken them, but rather made them more stupid, more dead and unconcerned. (4.) Upon this account the Lord rejects them; that is, he either gives over dealing with them entirely, or at least withdraws his blessing from the means. (5.) During the time of his forbearance, they are nigh unto cursing; there is nothing to keep the curse of God from them; it is fast upon its approach to them; they lie open to it, and are destined to the curse. Therefore, (6.) He burns such in the end. This, O sinners! is the ordinary way of the Lord's dealing with sinners. And now see and consider your own concernment in this: The Lord, as was said before, has often rained down upon you; ye have pretended to receive these showers, have been waiting upon the means; but have not brought forth good fruit; nay, on the contrary, ye have brought forth briers and thorns: what reason have ye then to dread the consequence? Have ye not reason to fear that ye are rejected, and so nigh unto cursing, and that therefore your end is to be burned? And that all this may not appear groundless, I offer this to your consideration,

6. As God has laid down the rule just now mentioned, as that by which he has walked, and will walk, with all to whom he gives the gos-

pel, I mean for ordinary ; so in his providence we find him dealing accordingly with sinners. I shall only lay before you two or three instances of God's dealing with sinners according to this rule. The *first* is that of the old world. The Lord did deal long and particularly with them, by the preaching of Noah, in order to their conviction ; they were not convinced, but rather grew worse and worse ; whereupon the Lord rejected them, gave over striving with them : and though he spared them, Gen. vi. 3. yet it was not on a design of mercy, but only to suffer them to fill up their cup, that they might be without excuse, and that their condemnation might be the more terrible. The *second* instance is that of the church of the Jews in our Lord's time. He preached to them, and endeavoured their conviction ; but they were not convinced ; therefore he rejects them : and though they had a while's respite, yet things that did belong to their peace were now eternally hid from their eyes, Luke xix. 41, 42. as he himself tells them ; and therefore they had nothing to look for but judgment and fiery indignation. In fine, I might to the same purpose set before your eyes many instances in the gospel-church, since the days of Christ, wherein the Lord has exactly followed the same measures. Now, tell me, O sinners I have ye not reason to fear, from all that has been laid before you, that ye shall sleep on, and never be convinced, never awakened. But this is not all ; for we must tell you,

3dly, O unconvinced sinners ! after all the pains that have been taken upon you for your salvation, it is highly probable that ye shall never be saved. We have just now laid before you many reasons we have to fear, that ye who have shut your eyes so long upon the discoveries of your sin and danger, shall never get them opened ; and if they never be opened, then I may say that, as sure as God lives, not a soul of you shall be saved : For, 1. If ye be not convinced, if ye get not your eyes opened to see your sin and misery, ye will never lay salvation to heart, as appears from what has been already discoursed to you at great length. 2. If ye lay not salvation to heart, then sure ye will never seek after, or look to a Saviour for salvation. Such as think they see, will not value eye-salve ; such as think themselves rich enough, will not look after gold tried in the fire ; such as see no hazard of damnation, will not seek after salvation. 3. If ye be not seeking after a Saviour, then though he come to you, yet will ye not receive him : nay, ye will reject him, and that with contempt. And indeed it cannot otherwise be : who would not with scorn reject the offers of a physician, that should press upon him healing medicines, when he was not sensible of any disease ? He is a fool that offers pardon to a man who is not condemned, or his hand to help up a man who is not fallen, or water to wash a man that is not defiled : and such a one is Christ in the eyes of all that are not convinced. Such a one really he is in your eyes ; and ye will be sure to treat him as such. 4. The necessary consequence of this is, ye must be damned, ye cannot be saved ; for there is no other way of obtaining eternal salvation, but only by Jesus Christ ; for "there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby sinners can be saved, but only that of Jesus Christ," Acts iv. 12. And damnation is the eternal lot of all them that reject him, Mark xvi. 16. But further,

4thly. We say, woe to you, O stupid, hard-hearted, and unconvinced

sinners ! for if ye shall be damned, your damnation will be most terrible, your state will be unspeakably miserable. And this will appear plain to any who seriously shall think upon it. For, 1. Damnation at the best is most terrible. This we did make appear to you not long ago : and indeed, though we had spoken nothing, the thing speaks for itself. What is terrible, if eternal burnings be not so ? “ Who can dwell with devouring flames ? who can dwell with everlasting burnings ? ” Who can abide the heat of that “ Tophet that is prepared of old, that is made large and deep, and has for its piles fire and much wood, and the breath of the Almighty like a stream of brimstone, kindling it.” The coldest place there will be hot ; the most tolerable place will be intolerable : and therefore the case of all who go there is terrible. But, 2. Your condition. O miserable sinners ! will be more terrible than that of many who shall be there. Christ says, “ Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida : for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes : But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell ; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day : But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.” Matth. xi. 21—24. In which remarkable denunciation of wrath against those sinners whom our Lord had endeavoured to convince, and yet were not awakened, it is plain, *First*, That some shall have hotter and more intolerable places in hell than others. *Secondly*, That they on whom most pains have been bestowed will have the hottest place. According to this rule of the divine procedure with sinners, I shall now proceed and lay before you your case. I say unto you, O unconvinced sinners in the congregation of Ceres ! before whom your sin and misery have so fully of late been laid open, your hell will be made hotter than that of many others. Woe unto you, for it will be more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. They never sinned against the means of grace as ye have done. Upon this very account, when our Lord sends forth his disciples, Matth. x. he tells them, “ That it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for such as should refuse them.” See 14th and 15th verses. Now, this is the case with you : the heathen world’s hell will be hot indeed ; but your furnace will be heated seven times more. Again, woe unto you, for your hell will be more intolerable than that of Capernaum, Bethsaida, or Chorazin ; nay, than that of the soldiers that crucified Christ, and of the Jews that condemned him ; for they only sinned against Christ in his estate of humiliation ; but ye have rejected him, now when he is exalted upon high, and seated at the right-hand of God. Woe unto you, it will be more intolerable for you than for those who live in many other churches, where the gospel is corrupted with a perverse addition of human inventions and doctrines, that are alien from it ; for ye sin against the clear light of the gospel, not darkened by the clouds of false doctrines. Once more, woe unto you of this congregation, if ye be found rejectors of the gospel, as certainly ye will if ye continue unconvinced ; for your hell will be more intolerable than that of many others in Scotland, who have not had

that pains taken upon them which ye have had, who have not had these frequent and clear discoveries of sin and duty, which ye have had by one of Christ's servants after another. Now, tell me, O sinners! can ye think upon your own case without horror? Sure, if ye understood it, ye would not, ye could not do it. But,

5thly, I say further to you, who shut your eyes upon your sin and misery, notwithstanding all that has been said for your awakening, if ye perish, and perish ye shall, if ye be not convinced, then your destruction is entirely of yourselves. And O how galling, how cutting will this be to you eternally! That it is, I make appear against you thus: Where can ye lay the blame of it? 1. Dare ye say that ye wanted the means of salvation? No, this ye cannot, ye dare not say; for if ye shall do so, we are all here witnesses for God against you; nay, your own consciences shall rise and fly in your faces, and force you, though unwilling, to own that ye have had the means. 2. Dare ye say that the means are not sufficient to the end for which they are offered? No, I am sure there shall not be one that ever had them, who shall dare to charge them with insufficiency. And if any of you should arrive at that height of intolerable insolence and impudence as to do it, it were easy to stop their mouths: For God might ask you, when standing at his tribunal, *First*, How do ye know them to be insufficient, since ye were never at the pains to try them? Next, He might stop your mouth thus: Behold here upon my right-hand, that innumerable company out of all kindreds, tongues, and nations; and how were they saved? If ye should go to them all, and ask them one by one, would they not all with one voice answer to your eternal shame and confusion, that by the use of these very means you had, but neglected, they were saved. 3. If yet ye will not see that all the blame of your destruction will come only to your own door, then I ask you, on whom will ye lay the blame? Dare ye lay it upon any other but yourselves, with any tolerable shadow of ground? I know ye dare not. To blame the devil or the world is downright nonsense; for it is salvation from them ye was to seek! and to tell that these are the cause of your ruin, when ye had relief against them offered, is vain; for it may easily be asked at a person who has lived under the gospel, and gives Satan or the world the blame of his ruin, was there not deliverance from Satan and the world offered to you? Were not the means mentioned sufficient? This will eternally acquit them as to your destruction, and lodge it upon yourselves as the principal cause of it, which is all we plead; for we do not exempt them from a share in the guilt of it. Now, this being incontestably evident, it remains that either Christ or his ministers are chargeable with your damnation, or that ye yourselves only are so.

As for our blessed Lord and master, we offer now to undertake his vindication against any that shall dare to accuse him. We have abundance to speak in his behalf; and are resolved to ascribe righteousness to our Maker. In his vindication, I appeal to your own consciences in a few particulars. (1.) Is he not indeed a sufficient Saviour, "one able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him?" Deny it you dare not; for this is the attestation of the glorious cloud of witnesses, who all have, by faith in his name, got above the reach of sin, death, and hell. (2.) Did ever any of you come to him, and get a refusal?

Produce your instances of this sort, if ye can. We can dare boldly, in our Lord's name, give a defiance to earth or hell to produce one instance of this sort. (3.) Has he not allowed, nay, invited, entreated, nay, commanded you to come unto him, that ye might be saved? If ye shall deny this, the word of God, the servants of God, are witnesses against you. (4.) Has he not waited long upon you? Has he not given you "precept upon precept, and line upon line?" And now, to conclude, I pose you on it, what could he have done more to you that he has not done?

But it may be ye will lay it to our door, and say, though Christ did his part, yet his servants have not done theirs; they have not given you fair warning. As for their vindication, I answer a few things; and I say, 1. Though they may be guilty, and conceal, or at least fail of faithfulness in their duty, yet your damnation is of yourselves: for ye have the word of God, that is plain, that is full, in its representation of your sin and misery; and had you paid a due regard to that, ye could not have missed of salvation: therefore yet your destruction is of yourselves. But, 2. We refuse the charge of your blood, and tell you, that ye have destroyed yourselves, if ye sleep on in your sins. And for our own vindication, I put a few things home to you: Have we not plainly told you your sin and danger? Have we not done it frequently? Have we not been particular in dealing with young and old of you? Have we not been pressing in order to your conviction? We have told you, with earnestness, both your sin and danger. We have looked from our watchtower, through the prospect of the word of God, and have seen the wrath of God ready to seize you; and we have not concealed his righteousness within us. And now, the Lord, the righteous Judge, be witness betwixt you and us, for we have done as much as will free us of your blood. Indeed we cannot deny ourselves to be sinners; and must own that we have sinned, even with respect to you: but this will not make your blood to be charged upon us; since, in order to our exoneratation as to that, it is only required we give you warning of your danger: and if ye be slain sleeping, ye are to blame. There is one word more I have to say to you, in the

6th Place; and then I shall leave you. What have we to do more with you? If ye comply not with the first part of our message, ye will be sure to refuse the second. Christ will be refused by you, and we will seem to you like them that mock. But whatever use ye make of it, we shall proceed in our work: and if we prove not the savour of life unto you, we shall prove the savour of death; for we are a "sweet savour unto God in them that are saved, and in them that perish; and if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," 2 Cor. iv. 3. I come now,

2dly, To speak a word to such as are awakened, and are saying, with the convinced jailor in the text, "What shall I do to be saved?" And to you we say,

1. Bless the Lord, who has opened your eyes. Ye were naturally as much inclined to sleep on as others; and it is only the distinguishing goodness of God that has made you to differ.

2. Study to keep your eyes open. If ye shut them again, and lose convictions, then ye may never more recover them. If ye quench the

Spirit, it is hard to say but the issue may prove fatal to you. If God, being provoked by your stifling convictions, shall give over dealing with you, I may say woe unto you, for ye are undone eternally. And that ye have got your eyes opened in some measure, to discover your hazard, will be so far from mending the matter, that it will make it much worse ; it will put an accent upon your sin, and likewise upon your punishment.

3. Endeavour to improve the discoveries ye have got of sin ; and seek not only to keep your eyes open, but to have them further opened. The more clear the sight of sin is which ye get, the more welcome will ye make the gospel-tender of mercy and relief, the more sincerely and heartily will ye close with it.

4. Would ye indeed be saved ? then take the advice in the text, " Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This leads me to what I did principally design in the choice of this subject ; therefore I shall, if the Lord will, insist upon it at length, because it is the very sum and substance of the gospel, that which comprises all the rest.

We have hitherto represented your case by nature, as ye are under sin ; and have hinted shortly at your case, as under the influences of the Spirit in conviction : now we shall proceed to a discovery of the gospel-relief, that is provided by infinite wisdom, for such as are awakened to a discovery of their lost and undone state ; and that lies before us in this 31st verse. Ye may remember, that when we did open to you the context, we did refer the explication of this verse, till such time as we had ended the former. This being now done, I shall briefly open the words, and then draw thence some such comprehensive truth as may give ground to discourse of that which we have principally in our eye.

The words contain a direction given to the distressed and awakened jailor : and in them we may take notice,

1. Of the person to whom the direction is given ; and, as was just now said, he is an awakened and convinced sinner. This is the gospel-method ; it proposes its remedy, not to those who are whole and well in their own eyes, but to such as are diseased. Christ is tendered to such as need him, and are sensible that they do so. The foundation of the gospel is laid in conviction of sin. Hence it is, that we find gospel-ministers begin their work here ; of which we have many eminent and notable instances in the scripture. John the Baptist, whose business it was to make way for Christ, and prepare sinners for entertaining the call of the gospel, begins his ministry with conviction, with preaching of sin to his hearers : " Repent," saith he, " for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He smartly rebukes such as came unto him, and fully unfolds unto them their need of a Saviour. There were two sorts of people that came to him, as we read in the 3d of Matthew. The ordinary sorts of people, and the more refined sort, the Scribes and Pharisees ; and he deals with them accordingly. The more gross sort he directly presses to repentance, in consideration of the approach of the gospel. Their sins went before-hand into judgment. Matters of fact they could not deny ; and therefore he presses them to load their consciences with a sense of them. The more refined sort of sinners he takes another way of dealing with ; he calls them vipers, thereby pointing them as full as

bad, if not worse than the common sort, and beats them from their strongholds they were wont to shelter themselves in from the storms of an awakened conscience: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father," &c. This was their ordinary relief; and this he discovers the vanity of, in order to prepare them for the entertainment of the gospel. The same course was followed by the apostles, Acts ii. The same method did our Lord use with the apostle Paul, Acts ix.; and this method have we endeavoured to follow in dealing with you; we have laid sin before you; and it is for the sake of such as are convinced among you, that we have entered upon the consideration of this relief, that is only suited to convinced sinners. But,

2. In the words we may take notice of the persons who propose this relief to this awakened sinner, viz. Paul and Silas. In reference to them, there are only two things I observe, amongst many: the one, that they were persons who had a commission from Christ to preach the gospel; the other, that they once had been in the same case themselves; which two, when they meet in one, help to fit a man to be a complete minister: one who in his measure will be capable to answer the character given of Christ, that "he had the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to weary souls."

3. We may take notice of the way wherein they propose this direction. And here it is remarkable, that they do it speedily, they do it plainly. No sooner is the question proposed, than it is answered. One would have thought, that it had been the apostle's wisdom to capitulate with him, and hold him in suspense, till such time as he should engage to contribute to his escape; but they would not do so, but presently offer him relief; having themselves been acquainted with the terrors of the Lord, they know how uneasy it would be for him to continue in that miserable perplexity, nay, how cruel it would be not to do their utmost for his speedy relief. They minded more the sinner's eternal salvation, than their own temporal safety. They had greater regard to the glory of Christ, than to their own safety. They were more concerned to satisfy a poor convinced and dejected sinner, than their own private grudges. And this they do, not by proposing the gospel in such a dark and obscure way as might amuse and confound, but in so fair and plain a way, as might be understood easily by the poor distressed man.

4. In the words we are to notice the direction itself, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." In which, again, we are to observe three things, the duty pointed to, the person whom it respects, and the way how it respects him. The duty pointed to is, Believe; that is, act faith upon, receive and rest upon Christ, look unto him. All these words signify exactly one and the same thing, as we shall see anon, if the Lord will. The person whom this faith respects, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we have a threefold title given to him. He is called the Lord; which points at his authority and dominion. He is Lord over all things and persons, because he did create, and doth still uphold them: and he is so in a peculiar manner, as he is the Redeemer of the church, for whose behoof all things are put into his hands, he being made "head over all things to the church." Again, he is called Jesus, to point at the design of his lordship and dominion: as he is exalted to be a Prince, so is he likewise to be a Saviour. Nay, the design of his advancement to that dominion which be-

longs to him as Mediator, is to fit him to be a Saviour; which is the proper import of the name Jesus, according to the scripture account of it, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Matth. i. 21. In fine, he is called Christ, i. e. Anointed, because he is anointed, designed, and furnished of God, to be a "Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins," Acts v. 31. The last thing we did notice in the direction itself, is the nature of that respect which this faith has to Christ; it is not said, "Believe the Lord Jesus Christ," but "believe [on] him, or [in] him." It is not simply to give credit to his word, and take as truth whatever he has said; but it is to rely on him, to put our trust in him, as one that is able to save such as come unto God, through him.

5. In the words we are to observe the encouragement that is given to engage to a compliance with this direction. And this is twofold; particular, thou shalt be saved; and more general, and thy house. In the

1st. We have three things worthy of our notice, 1. The thing that is promised, and that is salvation, the very thing that the man was seeking. 2. The order in which it is to be had; "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." 3. There is the certain connection betwixt the one and the other; thou shalt be saved if once thou believe. Where, by the bye, we cannot but take notice of the different influence of the Arminian doctrine of justification, and that of the apostle's doctrine, upon the comfort of awakened sinners. Had Paul said to him, Believe on the Lord Jesus; and if ye shall hold out in faith to the end, then ye shall be saved; if ye hold your will right, then all shall be well. If, I say, the apostle had made this proposal so, the poor man might have lain still upon the ground, and trembled all his days; since this would have given him, at best, but a may-be for his eternal salvation, and escape from eternal misery. But here there is a ground for present and abiding comfort: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The

2^d Branch of the encouragement is general, and thy house shall be saved. Which is not so to be understood, as if hereby it were promised, that their salvation should absolutely depend upon his belief: for his faith could not save them: since the scripture is express, that he that believeth not, every particular person who doth not believe, shall be damned; and, upon the other hand, that every particular person that believes shall be saved, though there should not one more believe. But the meaning of the words I shall offer to you shortly, thus: When it is added, and thy house, this expression imports, 1. That all his house had need of salvation, as well as himself. One might possibly think, as for that rude fellow, who treated the servants of Christ so ill, he has need to be saved; but his innocent children are guilty of nothing that can endanger their eternal happiness; but hereby the apostles intimate, that they needed salvation as well as he. 2. It imports the commonness of this direction; as if the apostles had said, this direction is not such as is peculiar to such great, notorious, and flagitious sinners, as thou hast been; but it is the common road wherein others walk towards happiness: there is one way for you, and your house to be saved in. 3. It imports the extent of this remedy; as if they had said, this is not only sufficient to reach and benefit you, but it is such as may reach all in your house, and they may have the same advantage as ye may have. 4. It imports the

certainly of salvation to them upon the same terms; as if the apostles had said, And let thy house believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they likewise shall be saved. 5. It imports this much, that hereby his family should obtain some special advantages, in order to their salvation.

Now, because I design not to speak any more of this part of the text, I shall here mention some of these advantages which the jailor's children or house had by his faith, and consequently which the children of every believer has by the faith of their parents. Amongst many such advantages, the few following ones are remarkable. 1. Hereby such children are taken in within the covenant: "For the promise," says the apostle, Acts ii. 29. "is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." They are allowed hereby to have their names particularly mentioned in the promise. This is the advantage which church-members have beyond others, who are not yet taken within the covenants, nor admitted to those ordinances which are a badge of their reception. The gospel-call says in the general to all, if ye believe, ye shall be saved; but it, as it were, names every one that is baptized, and says in particular to him, O man, thou who art taken within the covenant, I say to thee, as it were by name, thou shalt be saved, if thou believe: and this is much more confirming than the other. 2. The children of real believers have this advantage, that they have their parents pleading for them at the throne of grace, which many times has availed much, in order to their salvation, though the Lord sees not meet always to hear parents in behalf of their children. If he did always so, then possibly it might prove a snare both to them and to their children, and might lead them into a dangerous mistake, as if God's grace were not so free as it is: but that many times they are heard this way, is encouragement enough to engage all parents to pray for their children. 3. The children of godly parents have their counsel and instruction, which is of use to engage them to religion, and to bring to acquaintance with Christ: and of how much influence this is, the wise man tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6.; that is, ordinarily he will not do so. 4. The children of believing parents, they have their parents' good example; and this many times has more influence than precept and instruction: hence it is, that we find the apostle Peter exhorting wives to a holy walk, that their unbelieving husbands might be won by their conversation. "Ye wives," says he, "be subject to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear," 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. Faith made visible in a holy walk has a most attracting and engaging appearance; it is beautiful to a high degree. 5. Hereby children likewise have the advantage of the ordinances, which are the means of salvation. Godly parents will take care both to bring their children to the ordinances, and to bring the ordinances to them. 6. To add no more to this purpose, the children of believers have this advantage as they are theirs, that God has a particular respect to them; which we find him expressing upon several occasions to the children of his servants.

Since, as I said before, I design not to return again to this part of the verse, I cannot but apply this truth, that the children or house of a be-

liever has great advantages by his believing, in order to their salvation. And this I shall do in a few words to four sorts of persons: (1.) Believers; (2.) Their children; (3.) Unbelievers; (4.) Their children.

To the *first* sort I say only a few words. O believers! is it so that your children, as well as ye yourselves, have so many advantages in order to their salvation? Then, (1.) Bless the Lord, who has given you faith, which not only is the spring of innumerable advantages to yourselves, but also entails so many upon your very houses. (2.) Bless the Lord, and be thankful for the extent of the covenant; that it is so wide as to reach not only yourselves, but even your children. It had been much mercy had God given you your souls for a prey, though he had never given you the least prospect of mercy to your offspring. (3.) Take care that your children lose none of these advantages by your negligence. Some of them, as ye have heard, are of such a nature, that depends not only upon the being of grace in the parents, but upon its exercise. If ye live not holily and tenderly before them, ye may lay a stumbling-block in their way, which may cost you dear. The negligence of some godly parents this way, hath been heavy to them when they came to die, and sometimes even before. (4.) Do not quarrel God, or repine, if, after all, your children will fall short of salvation. If ye have acquitted yourselves faithfully, then ye have and may have peace, though they prove final misimprovers of their own mercies. Christ has nowhere promised that they shall be all saved: the word of God gives a contrary account of the matter: "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," Rom. ix. 13.

2dly, Are there here any who are the children of believers? Then, to such I say, (1.) Ye have great advantages, and therefore have an eminent call to thankfulness. Bless God that ye have religious parents. Many have found it not a little relieving to them in their straits and fears, that they could say, that they were early devoted to God by their parents, and that they had early access to know God, and had prayers early put up for them. (2.) Rest not upon these advantages; for your parent's faith will not save you. Think not to say within yourselves, we have a believer to our father and therefore all will be well. Esau had such a one to his father, and yet went to hell; and not a few others have gone the same way. Nay, (3.) I say to you, if ye shall be damned, all these advantages will be witnesses against you. Your fathers devoted you to God, but ye devoted yourselves to Satan; your fathers prayed for you, but ye prayed not for yourselves. These and many such will come in against you, as aggravations of your sin, and will eternally aggravate your misery. (4.) Therefore ye are called to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Since, if ye be ruined, ye must be so with a witness; if ye go to hell, it must be a hotter hell; therefore improve vigorously the advantages put in your hand. Resolve with Moses, Exod. xv. 2. "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; he is my father's God, and I will exalt him." (5.) Pay a double respect to your believing parents. Ye owe them much as your parents, much as believers, much as in Christ before you, and much as instruments made use of by God in promoting your eternal well-being. (6.) Take care that ye turn not aside out of their way; since this will prove eminently prejudicial, not only to yourselves, but to your posterity.

In fine, I say to you, if ye trace your parents' steps, ye shall attain their blessing, even the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

3dly, I have a few words from this head to say to unbelieving parents. Ye are miserable yourselves; for "he that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." Ye entail as many disadvantages upon your posterity, as believers transmit advantages to theirs; ye deprive them of many means which they might enjoy, ye ruin them by your example, ye provoke God against your families: in fine, ye do what in you lies to ruin them eternally; so that, not only your own blood, but the blood of their souls, will God require at your hands. Therefore, as ye tender their eternal advantage, as ye tender your own, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4thly, I have a few words to say to the children of irreligious parents, and then I shall proceed. Ye are at a great loss indeed by your parents' infidelity and impiety; yet it is not an irreparable one, for the door is open to you, and ye are called in. The promise of salvation is not only to believers, and to their children, but it is to "all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39. Therefore lay hold upon the advantage that ye have of mercy offered to you upon the gospel-terms. See that ye believe in the Lord Jesus. Be very thankful to God, and admire the richness of his undeserved kindness, in having a regard to you, and calling you, notwithstanding your own iniquities, and the iniquity of your fathers. Take care that ye transmit not these inconveniences, that ye yourselves lie under, to your posterity. And, if ever the Lord do you good, seek by all means the salvation of your parents; and if ye obtain not an answer of peace with respect to them, then I can assure you, your prayers shall return into your own bosom, and so ye shall be no losers.

Thus far have we prosecuted the last clause of the verse, to which we design not to return again: we shall now proceed to that which is our principal design, in the discovery of Jesus Christ, as the only relief of sinners, as the only one that can effectually quiet the conscience of an awakened sinner.

We have sufficiently explained the words already; that which I shall now insist upon at some length from them, is expressed in the following doctrine:

DOCT.—"An awakened sinner, betaking himself to, or believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved."

I think there is no need of any proof of the doctrine, it lies so plain in the words, and is so frequently asserted in the scripture, that one shall scarce look into the book of God, but he shall find some one proof or other of this truth. In the prosecution of this doctrine, we shall, if the Lord will, follow this method.

I. We shall tell you who this convinced sinner is, of whom we speak in the doctrine.

II. We shall offer you some account of the Lord Jesus, in whom he is to believe.

III. We shall shortly explain several scripture-expressions which point out this duty, that from them we may understand something of its nature; and then,

IV. We shall hold forth the nature of this faith in a few particulars, which may receive light from the former general head.

V. We shall inquire, what that salvation is, which they shall have who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. We shall offer some evidences of the truth of the doctrine, and then apply the whole, if the Lord allow time, and opportunity, and strength.

I. We begin with the first of these, which is, to show who this convinced sinner is, that shall obtain salvation on his believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall offer you his character in the few following particulars, in as far as we think it needful for our present design; for that it is in some measure requisite, is plain, since none can be saved but such as believe, and none can believe but convinced and awakened sinners. Take then the character of such a one, thus:

First. He is an ungodly man. It is only such as are ungodly who are saved by believing in Jesus: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, is his faith counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. Persons who are not ungodly have no need of Jesus; and persons who see not themselves to be such will never look after him.

Secondly, He is one that sees himself, upon this account, obnoxious to the judgment of God, even that righteous judicial sentence, that he who committeth sin is worthy of death. He sees himself lying open to the curse of the law, to the death it threatens against sinners. When the law says, "The soul that sins shall die," the sinner hears his own doom in that sentence, because he sees his name in the sentence. The sentence is against the soul that sins, and this he knows to be his very name.

Thirdly, He is a self-condemned man. He not only hears God passing sentence against him, but he passeth sentence against himself. Thus it is with every convinced sinner; he is as severe to himself as God, or the law of God, can be: whatever these charge him with, all that he takes with: whatever they determine to be done against him, he writes down under it, "Just; the Lord is righteous, for I have offended."

Fourthly, He is one that has his mouth stopped, as the apostle speaks, Rom. iii. 16. He has sinned, and he is sensible that there is no hiding of it. He is guilty, and there is no excuse. He is every way "shut up under sin," as the word properly signifies, Gal. iii. 22. "The scripture hath concluded all under sin;" that is, according to the force of the word, the scripture hath every way shut up, or shut in, all under sin, "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." In one word, he is a criminal, that has got such a sight of his crime, that he dare neither deny it, nor endeavour to hide it, nor extenuate it, but subscribes to the truth of all that the law of God and his own conscience charge him with. As for the sentence passed against him, he subscribes it just: he knows that he cannot flee from it, nor is able to undergo it. He is an enemy to God, brought to such a strait, that he is neither able to fight nor to flee. And when he looks to himself, and all those things he once laid some weight upon, he sees no prospect of relief. Such a one as the convinced sinner we speak of; and such

of you as never were brought to this pass, never did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This being once cleared, we proceed now.

II. To give some account of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom he is called to believe. Here ye are not to expect a full account of Christ; this none can give: nor shall I at large insist on what may be known of him, but only glance at a few things, which suit the case of the convinced sinner, of whom we have just now been speaking. And this we shall do in a few particulars.

First, The Lord Jesus Christ, on whom we are bid believe, is "Immanuel, God with us," God in our nature, God and man in one person. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And the Word that in the beginning was with God, and was God, in the fulness of time "was made flesh, and dwelt among men upon earth, who did behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This the apostle John doth evince at great length; this he expressly teaches in the first chapter of his Gospel, and the first fourteen or fifteen verses of it. Now, this discovery of Christ is extremely encouraging to a sinner, who is under the deep conviction of sin as with the jailor in the text. If ye tell such a one, when he cries out with him, "What must I do to be saved?" Go, believe on God, it would give him no relief, for all his fears are from God; it is destruction from God that is his terror. He sees the holiness, the truth, the wisdom and justice of God, all breathing out threatenings against him. Holiness cannot look upon an impure sinner. The truth of God has become surety for his destruction; the justice of God pleads it reasonable that the sinner should be punished, and thereby evil taken away, God's honour, and the honour of his law repaired; and wisdom is so deeply interested in every one of these claims, that it seems to join with them. Hence it is that the sinner is horribly afraid of God. So far would he be from looking toward him, that, like Adam, he would flee from him, and endeavour to hide himself. What would such a poor trembling sinner reply unto any who should bid him believe in God? Shall I believe on him who threatens me with destruction, on him all whose attributes conspire, and that most justly, my everlasting destruction? He has told me already what I am to expect at his hand, even sure and inevitable death: "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die." This God is a consuming fire, and I am a stubble before him. On the other hand, tell such a convinced sinner of a man, a mere man, and bid him look to him for relief: this at first blush appears utterly vain. What! are not all men involved in the same calamity with me? are they not unable to save themselves? What! is man able to sustain the weight of that heavy stroke of wrath which enraged Omnipotency is ready to lay on? Thus it appears, neither mere God, nor mere man, is suited to give relief to the sinner of whom we speak; but God and man united in one appears exceedingly suited to give him relief. There are three things which an awakened sinner will see, at the first view, in the person of Christ. (1.) He will see him to be one that may be approached by him. When man is made sensible of his own sinfulness, so far will he be from desiring a sight of God, that he will rather faint at the thoughts of it, since he dreads he cannot see him and live. Nay, such is the weakness of man since the fall, that the sight even of a created

angel has made some of the most eminent saints exceedingly afraid, as we have instances more than one in the scripture. But there is not that dread in the sight of one that is clothed with flesh, that appears in the likeness even of sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3. as to deter from approaching to him. Nay, on the contrary, will not every one in this case readily draw near, in expectation of relief from such a one, knowing him to be "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh?" This is one of the excellencies in Christ's person that ravishes the heart of a sinner that is looking out for relief. (2.) The person of Christ, thus consisting of the divine and human nature united in one, appears notably fitted for undertaking the work of a daysman betwixt an angry God and rebel sinners. He is equally interested in both parties; being God, he knows exactly what all the properties of God do demand of sinners; and being man, he knows well what man's state is. Thus the sinner's fear is removed, that there is "not a daysman who should lay his hand upon the head of both parties," as Job expresses it. (3.) A convinced sinner here sees one, not only capable to know, but even to be "touched with the feeling of his infirmities," who withal has wisdom and power to improve any sense he has of our misery to our advantage. This is what the convinced sinner with admiration views in Christ, who is the great "mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh."

Secondly, The Lord Jesus Christ is clothed with a threefold office, for the behoof and advantage of such as shall believe on him. He is a King, a Priest, and a Prophet: and each of these is exceedingly suited to the relief of an awakened sinner, as we may hear afterwards.

1st, I say he is a Prophet, and as such he was promised of old to the church by Moses: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you from among your brethren," says he. Because this scripture furnishes us with a full account of Christ's prophetic office, we may take a view of it at some length. So then that text runs, "I will (says God) raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," Deut. xviii. 18, 19. Now, in this scripture we have so full an account of Christ's prophetic office, with respect to our present design, that I cannot better unfold this matter than by making some remarks upon it. And (1.) Here we see that Christ is indeed a Prophet; for so he is expressly called, and as such he is here promised. That it is Christ whom Moses here intends, the Spirit of God has long since, by the mouth of the apostle Peter, fully determined, Acts iii. 22. (2.) Here we see his call to that office. "I will raise up a prophet," says God; that is, I will call and set one apart for that work. (3.) We see further his furniture for the work: "I will put my words in his mouth." (4.) We see what his work and business is: it is to speak to them all that is commanded him of God; to deliver to them the whole counsel of God for their salvation. (5.) Here we see who the persons are to whom God has a regard, in the designation of Christ to this office; they are sinners, sensible that it was impossible for them to hear God speak to them immediately, and yet live; which put them upon that desire expressed in the 16th verse of this chapter: "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my

God; neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not," (6.) We moreover see God's design in appointing Christ a Prophet, even a compliance with the desires and necessities of convinced sinners. This appears plainly to be his design, if ye observe the connexion betwixt the 15th and 16th verses of this chapter. The Lord promises, in the 15th verse, Christ to be a Prophet; and in the 16th he tells, that it was according to their desires, in Horeb. (7.) We may further take notice of the qualifications which they desire in this Prophet, and which Christ accordingly is endued with; and they are, that he be one of themselves, one who by his greatness should not be a terror to them, and that he be faithful in declaring to them all that the Lord should acquaint him with. Thus we see in some measure, and hereafter may see more fully, of what use it is to sinners, in order to their believing on Christ, that he be a Prophet.

2dly, The Lord Jesus Christ is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," Psal. cx. 4. God having made him so by an oath. And in his discharge of this office doth no small part of the concernment of awakened sinners lie. It is not my design at present to enter upon any large discourse of this office of Christ. I must here take notice of, and open up the nature of this office, in order to that end and scope which we now drive at, the relief of convinced sinners. I shall not stand upon a recital of all the acts which do belong to this office, of which not a few might be mentioned. There are two which deserve especial consideration, his oblation, and his intercession thereupon. The first is the foundation of the second. Now, that ye may understand what advantage flows from this office to the persons of whom we discourse, I shall a little inquire, who the person is to whom Christ offers sacrifice, who they are for whom he doth so, who he is that offers sacrifice, and what that sacrifice is that he offers: and, upon the whole, it will appear of how great advantage this office is to sinners, and how much he is thereby fitted to be the object of sinners' faith. I shall only touch at such things here as are indispensably needful in order to lay a foundation for faith.

1. As for the person to whom he offers the sacrifice, and with whom he intercedes, no doubt it is God only; and that as he is the just, the sin-revenging God, who has declared, that he "will by no means clear the guilty;" nay, "that the soul that sinneth shall die." There was no place for sacrifices before God was incensed by sin. It had no place under the first covenant, wherein Adam was allowed to come into the presence of God, without any interposal on his behalf by any other. God being then well pleased with him, he had acceptance with God, and by virtue of his acceptance, had a right to, and might ask and have whatever was needful for his happiness. But, upon the entry of sin into the world, God's favour was turned into anger and indignation against sinful man. This cuts him off from the expectation of advantage by God: nay more, threatens him with inevitable ruin and destruction from him, without the interposal of some one or other, as a Priest to appease the wrath of the sin-revenging God. Whence,

2. It is easy to understand who the persons are for whom he offers sacrifice. They are sinners, who are obnoxious to the wrath of God upon the account of sin; who not only are cast out of the favour of

God, but moreover are lying open to the stroke of vindictive justice. And this,

3. Clears to us who he is that must interpose as a Priest. He must be one acceptable to God: "Such an High Priest (says the apostle) became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26. One who, upon the account of his own sins, was obnoxious to the just indignation of God, could be of no use to sinners in this matter. Again, he must be one who was capable of being affected with the feeling of our infirmities, that he might have compassion upon us: and upon this account it is that the apostle says, Heb. ii. 17. "That it behoved Christ to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted:" For, as the same apostle has it, Heb. iv. 15. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In fine, he must be one called of God to this office; for no man takes to himself this office, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." All which qualifications are found in Christ, and in him only, "who is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession."

4. We are to consider what that sacrifice is, which Christ, as a Priest, doth offer unto an incensed God for sinners. That he should have something to offer, is absolutely needful upon account of the office: "For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer," Heb. viii. 3. What that sacrifice was, the same apostle tells, Heb. ix. 13. "For (saith he) if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?" The sacrifice he offers is himself.

What has been said of Christ's priestly office, I shall bring home to the business in hand, in the few following particulars. From what has been said, it appears, that the case betwixt God and sinful man stands plainly thus. (1.) Man has sinned, and thereby provoked God to wrath. (2.) Incensed justice lays hold of sinful man, takes him, and, like Isaac, binds him, and lifts the hand with the knife in it, to fetch a stroke down upon the sinner. (3.) In this case, no prayers, no tears of the sinner, nay, nor anything that the sinner can think upon, can avail; "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not," says our Lord, Heb. x. 5. (4.) While things are in this desperate condition with the sinner, Christ, being made a Priest, as has been said, by virtue of his office, steps in, and pleads for the sinner, and offers himself in the sinner's room, to suffer what justice was ready to have inflicted upon the sinner. (5.) Justice accepts of the sacrifice of this Lamb of God's providing, and lets the sinner go, but slays the sacrifice. (6.) This being done, God is appeased; he has no more to charge the sinner with, for the sacrifice has suffered; nay more, the sacrifice being of infinitely more value than the sinner, doth deserve and purchase a great many favours for him, all which this High Priest takes care to have bestowed on him; that is to say, he intercedes for

him, that he may lose none of these things which Christ has purchased for him; for his intercession is nothing else but that care, if I may so speak, which the High Priest of our profession takes, that all those for whom he did offer himself a sacrifice obtain the advantage of that sacrifice. And of how great use this office is to such sinners as are in the jailor's case, may appear in part from what has already been discoursed on this head, and may more fully appear from what we shall afterwards discourse on the same. Now we come,

3dly, To speak of Christ's being a King. As he is by God appointed to be a prophet and a Priest, so is he likewise to be a King: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Sion," Psal. ii. 6. His professed adherence to this cost him his life. This was his charge, that he made himself a king. I cannot stand to speak of all these things which do belong to Christ's Kingly office. I shall only hint at a few things which are of especial use to our present purpose. (1.) He has power and authority, by virtue of this office, to enact all such laws as may contribute to the good and advantage of his subjects. (2.) He has power to reduce all such as do belong to his kingdom to his obedience: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," says God to him, Psal. cx. 3. Sometimes the subjects of his kingdom do rebel against him; but he makes them by his power willingly to submit to him. (3.) He has power to protect his subjects against all their enemies; and hereupon it is that the church's confidence is founded, Isa. xxxiii. 22. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us." (4.) He has power entirely to make a conquest of all his enemies; for "he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet," 1 Cor. xv. 25. In fine, he has a power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself, "all power being given him in heaven and in earth;" and being made "head over all things to the church," he will take care to employ and lay out all for the advantage, peace, rest, and stability of his church and people. But, leaving this, we proceed,

Thirdly, To give a further account of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom sinners are called to believe. Two things we have said of him; one, that he is God in our nature; the other, that he is clothed with a threefold office. We add, in the next place, as the consequence of what has been said of him, that he is one in whom the convinced sinner will find relief against a threefold evil, under which he lies. There are three things which do exceedingly burden the conscience of a sinner in any good measure awakened, ignorance, guilt, and the power of sin. *1st*, He finds himself extremely ignorant, perfectly in the dark, as to the mind and will of God. He knows not what hand he shall turn to, what is sin, or what is duty, whether he had best lie still, or move out of his present state; or if he find it ruining to lie still, he knows not what course to betake himself to. Now, for this plague which is one of the dismal consequences of man's apostacy from God, there is relief in Christ's prophetic office, by which he doth translate sinners out of darkness into his marvellous light. What before was hid from the eyes of all living, that he reveals to sinners. That there were any thoughts of mercy or grace for sinners in the heart of God, could never have been known by any, had not Christ revealed it; for, "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the

Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. *2dly*, Man is pressed down with guilt, and it is only in Christ's priestly office that the awakened sinner can find relief against this: for there is no way of purging the conscience from dead works, but only by the application of the blood of Christ, who offered himself to God, through the eternal Spirit, for this very end. *3dly*, In him there is relief against the power of sin, which is one part, and that no small part, of the misery which man fell under by his apostasy from God. He is insulted over, and enslaved by sin; and there never was, nor can there ever be any relief for him, but only in Christ, who has a power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. He can strengthen the weak, and make the unwilling to become willing, by a day of his power, and turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Moreover,

Fourthly, The Lord Jesus Christ is one in whom the sinner finds a threefold tormenting scruple fully satisfied. When the Lord opens the sinner's eyes, and gives him a view of his condition, how matters stand betwixt God and him, then there are three things which lie exceedingly heavy upon the sinner. *1st*, Where shall I get one that has ability sufficient to undertake for me? The sinner sees so much needful to be done in order to his relief, that he can think of none in heaven or earth that is able to relieve him. He is, as it were, laid in a grave that has a stone rolled to the door; and many a time is he forced to put the question, Who will roll away the stone? He sees mountains lying in the way, and cannot think of an arm sufficient to lift them. In Christ only can he be satisfied. He it is who is the "mighty one, on whom the Lord has laid help," Psal. lxxxix. 19. one chosen out of the people for that very end, that he might be the strength of such as put their trust in him. He is the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength. *2dly*, When the sinner hears of one that is able, this gives him no relief; for presently another doubt perplexes him, and fills his soul with anxiety: Here indeed I see ability sufficient; Oh! but I fear he has no mind to employ and lay out his ability that way. This made many, in the days of Christ's flesh, when he lived upon earth, come to him with their hearts full of fear; they doubted he might not be willing to employ his skill, to lay out his ability for their help and relief. "If thou wilt, (said the leper,) thou canst make me clean," Matth. viii. 2; and so says the sinner. Now, in the discovery of Christ that is here made, we may see an answer to this doubt. As he is the Lord, one that has all power in heaven and in earth; whence it is that he is mighty to save; so he is Jesus, one that is willing, and designs to lay out and improve his ability that way. But here, *3dly*, Another doubt may stare the sinner broad in the face: There is perhaps wanting a commission for the work: the Lord Jesus Christ wants neither power nor will; but I much question the Father's willingness. This many times sticks long with distressed sinners. But in this person there is an answer to this as well as the former: He is Christ, him hath God the Father sealed, anointed, and set apart for that very work. He it is that hath exalted him to be a Saviour, and put power in his hand for completing his work, and saving to the utmost all that came to God through him.

Fifthly, Christ, as clothed with his threefold office, is able to remove a threefold obstruction that stood in the way of the sinner's salvation

and happiness, arising from the nature of God. *1st*, Justice had a plea against the sinner, and stood betwixt him and salvation. The sentence of justice is, that he who doth sin is worthy of death. Well, the sinner that believes in Christ answers, I am dead, I suffered in Christ. *2dly*, Holiness says, Nothing shall approach it that is impure. Well, Christ says, I have power to purge them from their filth by the spirit of judgment and of burning. *3dly*, But then the difficulty remains, as to the discovery of this to the sinner. If God should call him to blessedness, he could not bear it: but here Christ undertakes to be the messenger to impart the welcome news, that all these rubs are out of the way. These things I only name, because I have hinted at them already: and hereafter, if the Lord give life and strength, I may have occasion to treat them more accurately and distinctly. At present, we design rather soundness than accuracy, rather satisfaction to the distressed than pleasure to the curious inquirer.

Sixthly, Christ is one who is able to do the sinner a threefold kindness with respect to his spiritual adversaries. Three things they do against the sinner. *1st*, They charge him with things that he cannot deny. *2dly*, They lay deep contrivances against him that he cannot discover. *3dly*, They fall upon him with a force that he is not able to resist, and thereby endeavour his ruin. As for the *first*, Christ puts an answer in the sinner's mouth to all Satan's charges against him. As to the *second*, he gives him wisdom to escape his snares, to know the depths of Satan. And as to the *last*, he furnishes him with power, whereby he is made more than a conqueror over all enemies that put themselves in his way.

Seventhly, That there may be nothing wanting, this Lord Jesus Christ is one who can satisfy the mind, the conscience, and heart of sinful man. He fills the mind with light; he pacifies the conscience, and stills its disorders; and he presents to the will a suitable object. He as a Prophet opens blind eyes, and enlightens a dark mind; as a Priest, he stops the mouth of a disturbed and disturbing conscience; and as a King, he bestows upon man what is sufficient to content his heart, even himself and all things else.

Eighthly, To conclude all, he is one offered in the gospel for all these glorious ends to all who need him. He has bid all that are weary and heavy laden come to him, and has promised them welcome. He is one whom God has in the everlasting gospel proposed as the object of faith, on whom sinners are allowed, warranted, nay, commanded to believe, in order to their salvation. These things we shall not any further insist on at present; I come now,

III. To mention and open up these scripture expressions, whereby this duty of believing is held forth, and that are of the same import with that in the text. This is a duty whereupon salvation and damnation do depend; therefore the Lord has taken great care to make its nature plain; and because sinners are of many different sorts, and have different ways of taking up their condition, the Lord has expressed it so many ways, that every one may see that the duty is suitable to their circumstances, and expressed in a way that is adapted to their capacity. This inquiry we are now to enter upon, may be of great use; therefore we shall insist at the more length upon it. Some are ignorant of the nature of faith, know not what it is. This inquiry is like to lead them into an

understanding of that duty, which is the foundation of all others, without which they signify nothing in order to the salvation of such as perform them. Others know what faith is, but are not confirmed in their apprehensions of its nature, and therefore may be easily induced to think themselves in a mistake. To such it will be of notable use to understand, that the thoughts of its nature lean upon the plain meaning of so many scripture-expressions. In fine, this inquiry is like to bring down the thing to the capacity of every one of you who will give heed, since such as cannot take it up under one notion may under another. And I might add, that it may be of use to confirm such as have faith, that it is so, and to convince them who want it, that they do so. And, to conclude all, it will give light to the next general head, and confirm the description we design to give of it. These things have induced me, not only to inquire into the several expressions whereby the scriptures hold forth this duty, but to insist upon them at somewhat more length than we are wont to use upon such occasions. This being premised for showing the use of this inquiry, we come now to enter upon it.

First, Then, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is to "look unto him," Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." And to the same purpose is that of the apostle, Heb. xii. 1, 2. "Wherefore seeing ye also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." I conceive that the Spirit of God in the expression alludes to the brazen serpent set up in the wilderness. The children of Israel sinned against the Lord: therefore he sent fiery serpents, which stung them, and many died of their wounds. The Lord, in his pity, notwithstanding the dishonour they had done to him, was pleased to ordain the erection of a brazen serpent upon a pole, that whoever was stung might look to it, and be saved from death. Just so all men are stung by sin; and all men had died of the wound, had not God been pleased to set up Jesus Christ, and given command, that all who feel the smart of sin should look unto him and be saved. In this expression we may see what is the nature of faith. *1st*, We see who it is that believes: it is one that is stung, a sinner that is sensible of the smart of sin. Such, and such only, will believe. The whole Israelites, such as were not touched, such as were not sensible that they were touched and stung by the serpents, would not look to the brazen serpent; they had no business to do with it; it was none of their concernment; it had no use to them. Just so is it with whole sinners, that were never pained at the heart for sin; they see no occasion for Christ, and cannot understand of what use he is. *2dly*, We see here what it is that gives rise to faith; it is a smarting sense of present pain and future danger. The men that were stung found themselves ill, and saw ground to dread they might be worse, since the sting was mortal; this made them look. And this makes sinners look to Jesus Christ; they find the poison of sin already tormenting them, and they see that this is but the beginning of sorrows, the distemper being mortal. *3dly*, Here we see what it is to which the sinner looks; it is unto Jesus, and that as he is God, and a God laying out himself for the salvation of sinners. It is God, and none else, that must save sinners,

if they be saved. *4thly*, We may here see further, how the sinner looks to him, and what he looks at in him; which is, that he is the ordinance of God's appointment for his salvation, and proposed as such. Moreover, *5thly*, Here we see what faith itself is; for this expression of it, "looking to Jesus," plainly imports, (1.) That the person is convinced of the sufficiency of that remedy that God has appointed. (2.) Expectation of relief from it. And, (3.) The heart's resting here, and trusting to it for healing, without betaking itself to any other thing, from a conviction of its own need on the one hand, and of the sufficiency of this relief on the other.

Secondly, To believe on Jesus Christ, is "to come to him." So faith is expressed, both in the Old and in the New Testament. In that fore-cited 45th of Isaiah, we find that the Lord presses his people to believe, under the notion of looking to him, in ver. 22.; and we find, that, in the following verses, he promises that they shall obey this command, that they shall believe; and then he expresses faith by coming; "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." The same duty we find expressed by the prophet Jeremiah, in the same manner; "Return, (says the Lord,) ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings," Jer. iii. 22. To which they answer, "Behold we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." And what their errand is, the promise God makes in the beginning of the verse, and the profession they make in the following, plainly enough insinuates, it is to get healing to their backslidings; and it is to get that salvation from him which they had in vain looked for from the hills and multitude of mountains. And faith is frequently held forth by the same expression in the New Testament also, John vi. 35, 37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." And he complains, John v. 40. that they "would not come to him that they might have life." Now, the Spirit of God, expressing faith thus, gives us to understand, (1.) What the state of persons is before they do believe. They are at a distance from God, like the prodigal in a far country, not near his father's house, where he sustains many inconveniences, suffers hunger and thirst, is oppressed by enemies, and, in one word, meets with all inconveniences that tend to imbitter his life to him, and kill him outright at the long-run. (2.) Here the Lord insinuates to us what is the rise or the occasions of the sinner's motion, or of his believing, both upon God's part, and upon the sinner's part. Upon the sinner's part, it is a conviction, a smarting sense of present want, and of future wrath. He is hungry, and can have no food; he is thirsty, and can have no drink; and unless he gets food and drink, he knows he must die. He finds the present smart and pain, and knows he must suffer more, if he gets not a supply. The starving prodigal was hungry, and would have been glad of the scantiest allowance; but he could not have it in that unhappy place where he was. Just so is it with sinners, when at a distance from Christ; when the Lord opens their eyes, to see what their condition is. a pressing sense of want following thereupon is, as it were, the spring

of their motion toward the Lord Jesus Christ. On the Lord's part, that which occasions, nay causes, this coming, is his calling them, and his drawing them. He calls them to come unto him, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And he powerfully draws them to him; for no man can come, except he be drawn. Therefore we find the Lord promising peremptorily in that just now quoted scripture, Isa. xlv. 24. that "unto him shall men come." (3.) We see to whom a sinner comes by faith; it is to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom there is righteousness and strength to be had, which is matter of glorifying to poor sinners. (4.) We see what this coming itself is; it is the same with believing on him. And, [1.] This way of expressing faith imports, that the sinner despairs of being relieved where he is. If the prodigal could have been supplied where he was, he would not have come home; so neither would sinners. [2.] It imports a persuasion, not only of Christ's sufficiency, but his willingness; or, at least, that he is not unwilling that we should be bettered by his sufficiency, and have supplies for our wants, according to the riches of his glory. [3.] It imports the soul's rejection of all other things which have any appearance of relief in them; for when we come to one, we go from all the rest. [4.] It imports an expectation of relief from him; this holds the soul moving, and without this it could not move. In fine, the whole of this matter of deliberation, after felt insufficiency in other things, the soul comes to and acquiesces in Christ for salvation.

Thirdly, To believe on Christ, is "to flee, to run to him." He is that "strong tower, to which the righteous run and are safe." Prov. xviii. 10. And to the same purpose is that of the apostle, Heb. vi. 18. where God is said, by two immutable things, to provide for the strong consolation of such as have "fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them."

This expression takes in all that is in the former; for coming is included in flying and running, yet the expressions of running and flying import something more, viz. the sinner's being exceedingly moved by a sight of his danger, and his extraordinary earnestness to be out of harm's way. The awakened sinner is like the man-slayer of old; he was safe nowhere but in the city of refuge; therefore he run thither. He was obnoxious to justice; the avenger of blood had a commission to kill any murderer he found out of this city. So is it with sinners; they are in continual hazard of their life. Justice has a plea against them, and pursues them. Death is, as it were, the serjeant that closely follows the guilty; and if it overtake them before they get into the city of refuge, then they are gone; it will kill them doubly, it will put an end to their present life, and prove the beginning of eternal misery to them. "How excellent (says the Psalmist) is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings, Psal. xxxvi. 7. It is the excellency of God's loving kindness, as revealed to sinners in Christ Jesus, that engages sinners to betake themselves to him, and trust under the shadow of his wings; as the pursued birds are wont to betake themselves to the dam, and there to shelter themselves.

Fourthly, To believe is to "roll over our burden upon the Lord Jesus Christ," Psal. xxii. 8. The word that is there rendered trusted, in the first language signifies rolling over. He trusted in the Lord, that is, he

rolled himself over upon the Lord. Hence it is that we find our Lord inviting such as are weary and heavy laden to come to him, that they may find rest to their souls. Sin is one of the heaviest of burdens; man would sink under it quite. Every one that feels the weight of their sins, will, with the Psalmist, own, that they are too heavy for them to bear. "Mine iniquities (says he) are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me," Psal. xxxix. 4. They proved a burden so heavy to the angels that sinned, that its weight sunk them into the bottomless pit. They are at this day so heavy, that the whole creation groans under the pressure and weight of them, Rom. viii. 22. They who have the first fruits of the Spirit, and so have, as it were, the heaviest end of the burden taken off them, yet do groan, being burdened, 2 Cor. v. 4. The very being of sin, though its guilt be taken away, is such a burden as the saints find it hard to bear. In every one of these, we might take notice of all the particulars formerly noticed in the two first scripture expressions which we insisted upon; but it is needless to repeat the same things over and over.

Fifthly, To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is to "put on the Lord Jesus," Rom. xiii. 14. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus." Man by nature is, like Adam, naked: and though he endeavour to cover himself with fig-leaf aprons of his own framing, it will not serve his turn: it will not hide his nakedness, nor will it preserve him from the storms of wrath, that are the necessary consequences of sin. No robe can cover him, but that of Christ's imputed righteousness; and to believe is to put on Christ for righteousness. Now, here we see, (1.) What man's state without Christ is: he has no ornament, the shame of his nakedness is seen, and he is exposed to storms. (2.) Here we see what is that clothing that sinners betake themselves to: it is Christ; they come to him for white raiment, that is, for beauty and glory, and covering their shame. (3.) We see wherein the nature of faith lies; and we may take it up in three things. [1.] The sinner sees in Christ what is sufficient for ornament, for hiding of his nakedness, and preserving from the injury of the storm. [2.] He being convinced of his need, puts Christ as a covering betwixt him and spectators, that when they look to him he is not seen, but only Christ. His deformity is hidden under Christ's beauty and glory. [3.] The sinner rests here; he thinks of no other covering or ornament.

Sixthly, To believe on Christ, is "to receive him," John i. 2. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." And elsewhere it is expressed in the same manner; only the object is varied, for they who believe are said to receive remission of sins, Acts x. 43; and to receive the atonement, Rom. v. 11. Here we may again understand something of the nature of faith: for here we see, (1.) Who he is that believes: He is one that wants Christ, he is one that wants righteousness; one that is condemned to die, and wants a pardon. (2.) We see what it is that faith eyes, that the sensible sinner receives; it is Christ, and all with him, as offered to him; for as he is said to receive Christ, so is he said to receive remission of sins, &c.: and it is most certain, that none can separate Christ and his benefits; he that takes one takes all. (3.) We see what faith is: it is the acceptance of what is offered for the ends for which it is offered.

Christ and all his purchase is made offer of to sinners, and that freely ; and they accept of the offer, and receive him.

Seventhly, To believe on the Lord Jesus, is "to lean upon him," to "stay ourselves upon him." "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" Cant. vii. 5. that is, believing on her beloved. And in like manner doth the prophet Isaiah express himself, Isa. l. 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Now, here we again may see what the sinner's state is before he doth believe : he is in a tottering condition ; he is not able to stand under the weight of that burden he has upon him. He is not able to abide the shock of the storm that is blowing against him ; if he get not something to lean to, he must fall ; and if he fall, he is crushed entirely ; for he stands upon the brink of the pit, and if he falls, he falls into that pit whence there is no redemption. If he miss a step, and plunge into the pit, there is no stepping up thence again : this he sees to be his case ; he is sensible of his danger, and sees Christ able to support him, to establish him ; therefore he leans to him ; he expects to be able to stand the shock of all the storms that can blow against him in his dependence on him.

Eighthly, To believe on Christ, is "to lay hold on him, to take hold of his strength." "Let him take hold of my strength, (says the Lord,) that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me," Isaiah xxvii. 5. And it is called a taking hold of God's covenant, Isaiah lvi. 4. And in the New Testament it is called an apprehending of Christ, Phil. iii. 12. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And Heb. vi. 18. it is called "a laying hold on the hope set before us." The sinner is like to sink ; and seeing Christ by him, he catches hold of him to keep him from sinking. We might multiply other expressions of faith, such as, cleaving to the Lord, opening to Christ, submitting to the righteousness of God, 2 Kings viii. 5. Deut. iv. 4. These we pass, not designing a full enumeration, but what may lay a foundation for the following inquiry, and lead us into the meaning of this word used in the text. We might have insisted in showing these three or four last expressions to be comprehensive of all the particulars noticed in the two or three first expressions : but what is obvious needs not be insisted upon. We shall therefore wave the explication of any more texts to this purpose, and proceed,

IV. To inquire what is implied in this duty enjoined in the text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." This inquiry will be easy, after such a foundation has been laid in the preceding. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, implies then,

First, A sense of sin and misery. This is plain from all the expressions whereby the Spirit of God elsewhere points forth this duty. There is not one of them but carries in it an indication of this. The stung Israelite is sensible of his smart and danger, before he looks to the brazen serpent. The prodigal knows his want, before he thinks of coming to his father's house. The man-slayer understands his sin and danger, before he flees to the city of refuge. The burdened sinner is sensible of the weight of sin, before he roll it over upon another : and

the like may be said of all the rest of the expressions mentioned ; putting on, receiving, leaning to, laying hold of, opening, and cleaving to the Lord Jesus Christ. All of them plainly intimate this, that a sense of sin and danger is the ground-work of this duty, necessarily presupposed to, and implied in it. And, moreover, we may not only understand, that the sense of sin and misery is implied in the duty, but also what sort of these a sense of it is, which is requisite, and which is implied. And,

1. By these expressions we may see, that it is a distinct and particular knowledge of our sin and misery.

The sinner that betakes himself to Christ by faith, knows his sore, understands well the evil he labours under. It is not a confused and general apprehension of danger, such as persons who are melancholy sometimes fall under, without understanding what it is, or whence it flows ; but they can tell distinctly what it is that pains them. The stung man knows where he is wounded. The prodigal can tell what he wants. The man-slayer can tell why he makes such haste to the city of refuge. The burdened sinner can tell, that it is a load upon him, under the weight of which he is like to be crushed, that makes him flee to one that has shoulders able to carry it.

2. This sense of sin and misery, as it is distinct, so it is deep. A great many of those who live under the gospel, and are furnished with any tolerable measure of knowledge, it may be, can tell pretty distinctly their sin and danger, and, it may be, know likewise many particular sins they are guilty of : yet their sense, however distinct, is not deep. But such as do believe have a deep sense of sin and misery. It is such a sense as is fixed, and has rooting in the mind ; it engrosses the thoughts, and fills the mind with apprehensions about the soul's state and condition. And, moreover, it doth not hold here, but sinks down upon the heart, and takes hold of the affections, and fills them likewise. Fear, grief, hatred, and revenge, take their turns in the soul ; grief for the offence done to God ; fear for the consequence of it, with respect to ourselves ; hatred against sin, and self-revenge, because of our folly in bringing on the guilt of so much sin upon ourselves. Many in the visible church who will pretend they are sensible of sin, have never, it may be, to this day been affected with it ; never had any grief or fear, any hatred or revenge against it, and themselves on its account. Such persons, pretend what they will, are indeed strangers to faith, and one day will be found so. The man that flees for his life to the city of refuge, not only knows what he has done, and what sin deserves, but moreover has a deep impression of both. What do ye think was it that busied the man's thoughts, when fleeing to the city of refuge ? Certainly his sin and danger were the things that struck with him, and affected his heart with fear, which made him flee again to the city of refuge ; and the like might be said with respect to the other expressions of faith.

3. This sense of sin and misery is a pressing apprehension of both ; and this lies in two things. (1.) It makes his present state and condition intolerable ; I mean, it makes a Christless state utterly intolerable. It is so uneasy, it cannot be endured. It is not like that sense of sin which most part have, and have no more, that suffers them to live contentedly all their days in the world without Christ. Who of you will not pretend to be sensible of sin ? and yet, who of you doth not find it

an easy thing to live in that condition? I appeal to your consciences, who pretend to be sensible of sin, whether or not ye could live contentedly all your days in your present state, had ye but corn, and wine, and oil, all the necessaries for a present life? I am sure most of you cannot but own, that ye would and could do so; ye could easily digest sin, and get rid of disturbance from that, if things in the world went well with you. A sad and sure symptom is this, that hitherto ye are not sensible to sin, and therefore do not believe. (2.) It prompts to diligent endeavours after salvation, as absolutely necessary. The sensible sinner, as he cannot rest and acquiesce with satisfaction in his present condition, so it makes him restless in looking after relief.

All these things appear so plain from what has formerly been discoursed, in the explication of the several scripture-expressions which point forth this duty, that it is needless to insist upon the proof of them by new scriptures. And indeed, though the testimonies alleged had not given such pregnant proof of this, the reason of the thing itself will discover it to be indispensably necessary to faith, that there be a distinct, deep, and pressing sense of sin. For, (1.) Where there is only a confused apprehension of danger, or indistinct notion of it, it confounds and disturbs the sinner, and puts him perfectly out of ease to judge of the suitableness of any relief that is offered to him. He knows not where the sore is; and therefore can neither know what would be useful; nor where to apply it. (2.) If impressions of sin and danger be not deep, and amount to no more but some notions floating in the brain, every thing will carry the mind off from the gospel-relief, and take it to other things. Unless the affections be some way or other engaged, we seldom do any thing to purpose in any business. In fine, a man that feels some pain, and fears some danger, may defer and neglect his going to the physician; but one that is under intolerable pain, must take some one way or other for his relief, and will stick at nothing, if he may obtain it. It is much the same with these sinners, who have some sense of sin, but are strangers to this distinct, deep, and pressing apprehension of their sin and misery, which faith comprehends and implies in its nature, as it is with one who has some sore in his leg: he knows where the pain is; he feels some smart of the pain; but it is not such a smart as disables entirely from walking or conversing with others: he goes indeed uneasily with it; ay, but he goes still, and, it may be, sometimes he gets rid of the thoughts of it, and therefore can make a shift to live in that condition. If one tell him that it will turn to a gangrene, and prove mortal; he flatters himself, that possibly it may cure of its own accord, or by the use of some domestic remedies; and therefore he will rather stay still in that condition, than go to a physician who cures by cutting off. Just so it is with half-awakened sinners: they never come the length of believing, because their sense of their sin is not so deep as to make them in earnest to think of the physician. They hope to get their wound cured at home, by some easier remedy than the cutting off the right hand or foot, and plucking out the eye. But where the sense just now spoken of is sound, such a one will be satisfied with none of those things. This sense is not only presupposed to faith's first actings; but, moreover, it continues in some measure in the soul as long as we live here by

faith; and is the spring of all the after actings of faith. But passing this, this believing implies,

Secondly, Some knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hence it is, that we find faith called knowledge by the prophet, Isa. liii. 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." By his knowledge, that is, by faith in him, shall my righteous servant justify many: now this knowledge is evidently requisite. From all that formerly has been hinted, in the opening up of the scriptures we insisted on, not one of them but speaks this needful. And here there must three things be known in reference to Jesus Christ.

1. The excellency of his person. This is that which faith fixes its eye upon first. It is him we primarily receive; it is to him we look, we flee, we run; it is on him we lean, we stay ourselves, and roll over our burdens; therefore his person must be known. We must know that he is God and man in one person, "God manifested in the flesh." Now, that this knowledge of the person of Christ is a necessary ingredient in faith, not only appears from the consideration just now laid down, but also from this, that otherwise we can know nothing of his usefulness to us, since all that has its rise from the glorious constitution of his person, is from this, that he is one able to save lost sinners: therefore of necessity this must be known.

2. Believing implies the knowledge of Christ's fulness to save. There is no faith without this. It is the knowledge of sufficiency alone that can induce to reliance; and if there be not in Christ a fulness of all these things that are requisite in order to the effectuating the salvation of sinners, then he is no meet, no suitable person to be believed on; therefore of necessity he must be known, as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth." And this, as was said before, flows from the constitution of his person, which therefore must be known in order to our acquaintance with this. "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth." It is from the union of the two natures into one, the Word's tabernacling in flesh, that this glorious fulness of grace and of truth flows.

3. Believing implies the knowledge of Christ's suitableness to the sinner's condition. There may be fulness and sufficiency where there is not suitableness. The city of refuge, though its gates had been shut, and the ways to it impassable, would yet have been sufficient to have preserved such as should get within it: but in this case, a sinner, the man-slayer, could have no relief from it, there being no way of the communication of that sufficiency to him, no way for him to have that security communicated to him. Just so it is here; Christ clothed in human nature is indeed, and could not have but been sufficient to do all that was requisite in order to our eternal salvation: but in order to sinners accepting of him, it must be understood, that there is a way of conveyance, whereby all this fulness may be called ours. We must know him, not only as full, but as he has assumed the exercise of his three-fold office, whereby all the benefits he has purchased are made over unto us, and do in very deed become ours. But we proceed to a

Third thing implied in believing. This duty not only implies the

sense of sin, and the knowledge of Christ just now insisted upon, but moreover it implies some knowledge of the gospel offer of Christ. This is absolutely necessary in order to our acceptance of Christ. It was not enough to set the man-slayer a running to the city of refuge, that he knew there was a city that had gates open, and was sufficient to preserve him; but moreover he must know, that it was designed for that purpose, that he had warrant to enter in at these open gates, and so to expect protection. And here there are two things must of necessity be known.

1. That Christ and all his benefits are indeed offered in the gospel to poor sinners, and that freely. Hence it is, that our Catechism doth thus qualify the object of saving faith, while it describes faith in Christ to be a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him as he is offered to us in the gospel.

2. As we must know that he is offered to us, so we must understand what the terms are whereon he is offered. That he is offered freely, doth not hinder his being offered upon terms. If one offers another a sum of money, if he will receive it, he may be said to offer it upon terms, and yet offer it freely: and just such are the gospel-terms upon which the Lord Christ is offered; whoever will take him and use him, shall have him. But to be a little more particular, here we may learn what these terms are, from that of the apostle, Phil. iii. 3. For "we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." These are the persons who have an interest in Christ, who come up to these terms: and the knowledge of them is necessarily implied in believing. We must know, that upon these and no other terms we may be saved. (1.) We must know, that all confidence in the flesh is entirely to be abandoned. There must be no expectation of relief or salvation, from any external privilege, or any performance of duties. We must know, that our own prayers and tears can be of no value in this matter. (2.) We must know, that we are only to rejoice in Christ Jesus. What is here called rejoicing is elsewhere called glorying; that "he that glorieth may glory in the Lord." And here it is opposed to a having confidence in the flesh; which says plainly, that this rejoicing in Christ Jesus is placing all our confidence and comfort in him alone. (3.) We must worship God in the spirit, in the strength of that spirit which Christ did purchase for, and bestows on such as do believe on him. We must serve God in the way of his own appointment. Upon these terms is Christ offered in the gospel; and these must be known. The knowledge of them is undoubtedly implied in faith, as well as the knowledge of sin, and of Christ, formerly insisted upon. This leads me to the

Fourth thing implied in believing, and that is, the heart's closing with the gospel terms just now mentioned. This is the principal thing, without which there can be no faith, no believing; for, if we should speak strictly, this is faith, and all the other things mentioned are only pre-requisites; yet they are such as are not only presupposed to the first actings of faith, but must also accompany it, in some measure, as long as it continues in the soul; that is, as long as believers are on earth. Now, this acceptance of Christ upon the gospel terms takes in three things.

1. A renunciation of all other things. Hence it is that believers are

said to have no confidence in the flesh; that is, they have no expectation of relief from any of those things corrupt nature is wont to incline us to rely on. The soul's motion to Jesus Christ, is a motion from all other things. The soul that rolls the weight of all over upon him, doth not lean to any thing besides him. All the expressions formerly opened up do sufficiently intimate to us, that this renunciation of all confidence in other things, belongs to the nature of faith, and must go to the constitution of it: and the same the scripture plainly enough declares, when it expressly enjoins sinners this as a part of their duty, or rather expresses the whole of this duty by it: "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, nor will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains," says the returning church, Hos. xiv. 3. and Jer. iii. 23. And these two texts are a good commentary upon that forecited expression of the apostle, "and have no confidence in the flesh." To have no confidence in the flesh, is to expect no salvation from the hills and multitude of mountains, from Ashur, from horses, or the work of our own hands.

But that I may be a little more particular, faith or believing has in it an express renunciation, (1.) Of our own wisdom. Carnal man is exceedingly inclined to trust to his own fleshly wisdom, which is enmity against God, and to advance this as of use to direct him to true happiness. This was that which befooled the heathen world; they thought by their own wisdom to reach happiness, to know God. But in the wisdom of God, "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and the believer becomes a fool, that he may be wise, perfectly renouncing his own wisdom, and subscribing himself a fool, owning himself, with wise Agur, more brutish than any man. (2.) Believing has in it a renunciation of our own strength and power. Man is conceited exceedingly of his own ability. As long as man has a leg of his own to walk upon, he is sure never to look near Christ Jesus. But no sooner has he a mind for Christ, but presently he confesses his own impotency. If the man be able to stand alone, what means he to lean upon another? If he be able to bear his burden, what needs he roll it over upon another? (3.) Believing has in it a renunciation of man's own righteousness. The natural man goes about with the carnal Jews, who were "ignorant of the righteousness of God, to establish his own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God." But the believer rejects this, and owns with the church, Isa. lxiv. 6. "We are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The believer sees his righteousness all ragged. He sees here one duty wanting, and there another entirely amissing, which makes his righteousness no better than a ragged coat, which is full of holes: and he sees what remains to be all defiled; there is some wanting, and what is not so is filthy. The best fall short of, and are entirely deficient as to the practice of some duties: and filthiness adheres and cleaves to what they do perform: therefore they renounce their own righteousness. (4.) Believing, or faith in Christ, renounces all foreign relief; I mean, relief from other things besides Christ. It will not trust to privileges, to saints, to any creature. If any would entice believing sinners to follow any other, then faith answers the tempter, as Peter did our Lord, in an address to Christ himself, "To

whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Now, all these are comprehended in that of the apostle, "having no confidence in the flesh." And therefore we find him rejecting his own wisdom, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; rejecting his own strength, for acquaintance with the power and efficacy of Christ's death: renouncing his own righteousness, that he might be found in Christ; and counting all the privileges he had as one of Abraham's children, one in covenant with God, one of the strictest sect of the Jews, to be but loss and dung, for an interest in Christ.

2. There is, in believing on Christ, a consent of will to the terms of the gospel, as good and desirable. And who can refuse this, save such as are blind? The gospel-terms may be reduced, as has been hinted just now, to three. (1.) Seek not salvation from that which cannot save you, have no confidence in the flesh. (2.) Take freely whatever ye need. Need ye righteousness, or need ye strength, or need ye wisdom, or redemption? All these ye may have freely in Christ, who is made of God to all them that believe, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; in whom all believers have righteousness and strength; in whom all the seed of Israel, by this means, shall be justified and glorified. This is to rejoice in Christ Jesus. (3.) Lay out and improve what ye receive. Ye are not bid spin a web out of your own bowels; but ye are bid improve what is given to you. Ye are bid worship God in spirit; ay, but it is by the assistance and direction of the Spirit that is given freely. The will closes with these terms as good and agreeable; and who could refuse to do so, were there not in him the carnal mind that is enmity against God? The world can conceive nothing more reasonable, no terms more encouraging, favourable, and condescending, than these; therefore they are embraced as worthy of the love, goodness, mercy, and wisdom of God.

3. Hereon there ensues an acquiescence and rest of soul in Christ Jesus for salvation. The sinner is no more tossed in perplexing inquiries after a Saviour. Now it fixes upon him, according to the proposal made of himself; and it will not look near any other thing. It has tried them and found no rest in them: Now it comes where it finds rest; and therefore here the soul is in a blessed composure. It has confidence in Christ Jesus, rejoiceth in him, and glories in him. If conscience challenge for sin, it points it to Christ Jesus, and lets it see what he has done, and seeks no other answer to conscience. If the threats of the law set themselves against the sinner, he gets in behind Christ's righteousness to screen him, and here he thinks himself secure; therefore he will not betake himself to any thing else. He rests in this as safe, and seeks not any other thing to shelter him from the wrath of God, to fit him for every good word and work. Thus we have opened up in some measure to you the nature of faith, sufficiently in order to our present design. We proceed now,

V. To inquire what this salvation is, which a convinced sinner believing on the Lord Jesus Christ shall assuredly obtain. Upon the former verse, we did observe, that this word is taken in a lax sense, not only for a deliverance from evils, but for a collation of good things; that is plainly, it takes in all that is requisite in order to re-instate the sinner in that happy condition whence Adam fell, or even into a better; so that

salvation and eternal life do not much differ. Now, here I shall first inquire, what salvation thus taken implies, and then name some of its properties.

As to the *first*, salvation implies these three particulars, to which all others may be easily reduced.

1st, Deliverance from wrath. Sin deserves wrath : the sinner sees it a-coming, and feels its beginning, which makes him flee for refuge from the wrath to come. Thus it was with the jailor in the text : he was like a man going abroad, who feels the beginnings of a bitter storm, and sees the clouds gathering, which portends a heavy deluge ; and not being able to abide the very beginnings of it, he timeously betakes himself to a covert ; he runs to seek shelter from the storm. So this awakened sinner feels some of the drops, as it were, of the wrath of God in his face already ; and he knows he is not able to abide any more, and therefore cries out, "What must I do to be saved ?" Where shall I get shelter ? And here his question is answered : "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He will screen thee from that storm of wrath that has begun to fall down with so great violence.

2dly, It implies a title to life eternal. The man would be happy, and how he shall be so he cannot tell. He fears he may never attain to it, and this pains him. Once man was on a fair way to eternal life ; but now he is far out of it, and never like to obtain it. This makes the poor awakened man shiver and cry out, "What must I do to be saved ?" I cannot think of falling short of happiness : how shall I come at it ? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is the answer : thou shalt have a title to eternal life ; "for he that believeth the record that God hath given of his Son, putteth to his seal that God is true." And this is the record that God hath given of his Son, that "there is life eternal in him," and that "he that hath the Son hath life," 1 John v. 11, 12.

3dly, It implies a full possession of this life eternal, and perfect deliverance : "What must I do to be saved ?" How shall I get out of harm's way, be meet for, and be actually possessed of that "inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and fades not away ?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Ye shall be made meet for, nay, put in actual possession of this blessed inheritance, and saved from all these dangers that lie in the way. Ye shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and shall receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 5, 9. Thus have we given some account, in the general, what salvation implies. We shall now proceed to give some account of its properties, whereby we shall see further into its nature.

Many properties of this salvation might be named and insisted on, were it needful we should inquire into them all. I shall satisfy myself to name and insist a little on a few of the more considerable properties of it. And,

1. It is a great salvation. So the Spirit of God expressly calls it, Heb. ii. 2, 3. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard

him." And indeed, if we shall take a view of it, we shall find it deserves the title or character given of it. It is called a great salvation; and it is so,

(1.) In regard of its contrivance. It is not a thing that falls out by chance, without any project, forecast, or forethought; no, but it is one of the deep contrivances of Heaven. It is the master-piece of divine wisdom. There was much wisdom in the contrivance of the world, much in the creation of man, much appears in the works of providence; but infinitely more in this. The manifold wisdom of God is to be seen in the salvation of the church, Eph. iii. 10: wisdom lies in proposing right ends to one's self in acting, and finding out and using suitable means, and ordering all the circumstances of action to the best advantage. Now, all these parts of wisdom are eminent in this salvation. Never was there a more noble end than what God had in the salvation of the church. [1.] What more suitable to God than that he should glorify his mercy and grace, the only attributes which, before the fall of man, had not been glorified in any remarkable instance? God had made his infinite wisdom, power, and Godhead, legible in the creation of the world. His moral perfections were copied out in the souls of men, and in the nature of angels. Thence one might learn, that God was glorious in holiness, goodness, bounty, justice, and all other moral perfections: but all the while there was no vestige, no footstep of mercy; nor could there be, till once sin entered into the world. Vindictive justice was eminent in the miserable state of fallen angels, who were justly plunged into remediless ruin and destruction; only mercy seemed veiled and hid. There was nothing by which this darling attribute could be known, or God receive any glory on the account of it. It was not seen in either the works of creation or providence; nay, there seemed by these no room for it; since, upon supposition of the fall, where only there was access for it, the door seemed perfectly shut against its appearance, by the peremptoriness of the threatening, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." And indeed man had all the reason in the world to believe it should be so, not only from the veracity of God, but from the sad and lamentable proof of God's holy severity, that was given in the ruin of the angels that sinned. [2.] What more worthy the great Lawgiver of the world, than to make it appear to the conviction of all, that the laws he at first framed were exactly suited to the ends of government, the glory, the safety, the comfort and peace of the subjects, and the honour of the Governor? This end surely, if any other was worthy of God the Lawgiver of the world; and this he had in view in the salvation of the church; and this he obtains by this means. The obedience of the Son of God proclaims, that it is man's honour to obey: the peace that his people when renewed by his grace, do find in obedience, proclaims it their interest to obey; the pain they suffer in the ways of sin, declares all the calumnies cast upon the ways and laws of God abominably false. [3.] What end more suitable for him who had undertaken the protection of his subjects, which is unquestionably a part of a governor's business and work, than to give an eminent proof of his abilities for defeating the most crafty and subtle plots, and breaking the greatest force of his and his people's enemies? And this is done in a signal manner, in the salvation of the church. [4.] What more suitable end

for him who had all the jarring elements to manage, all the opposite tendencies of things to govern, and direct to one common end, than to give a proof of his wonderful skill in reconciling the seemingly opposite and irreconcilable interests of justice and mercy? Never was there any end more noble, more suitable, than that which God had in view in the contrivance of this salvation. He designed to complete the discovery he gave of his attributes, to honour his laws, to expose the folly and weakness of his great enemy, to show his glorious wisdom in composing the greatest difference, reconciling the most seemingly cross and irreconcilable interests of justice and mercy.

Thus we see the end was wise; nor were the means, and the timing of the means, less so. Much of wisdom was there laid out in fitting the person of the Redeemer, to open a door for the glorification of the grace, mercy, and love of God, to repair the honour of God's law, and of his authority, to baffle Satan's power and policy, and to reconcile and amicably compose the opposite interests of spotless justice and tender mercy. Much of wisdom shines in the timing of this discovery, and in the application of it. Well might it be called manifold wisdom that shines herein. And justly may that salvation which is thus wisely contrived be called great, in respect of that wisdom which did contrive it.

(2.) This is indeed a great salvation, and cannot but be so, if we consider the author of it, God, the great God. He it is who contrived, and claims the honour of the accomplishment of this work of salvation of the church, as his due: and this honour is given him cordially by all those who are saved. They find themselves obliged to own all other things unable for contriving, or for effectuating a work so great as is the salvation of sinners. "In vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people," Jer. iii. 23. And this acknowledgment of the church is consonant to that declaration which God gives, Isa. xlv. 21.—"There is no God else beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me." All the persons of the glorious Trinity have their distinct hand and concernment in this salvation. The first proposal is owing to the love of the Father, the accomplishment of it to the Son, and the application of it to the Spirit. Sure it must be a great work indeed, a great salvation, that busied the thoughts of the blessed Trinity from all eternity, and employed, if I may so speak, their hands in time. And such is the salvation we speak of.

(3.) It is a great salvation, if we consider the way of its accomplishment, the means whereby it is brought about; and these were the wonderfully great condescension of the Son of God, humbling himself so far, as to take upon him "the form of a servant," of sinful man, Phil. ii. 6, 7; his inexpressibly great sufferings in soul and body, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power put forth in the application of these great things which were purchased, not with things of so small a price, so inconsiderable as silver or gold, or such corruptible dross, but "with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18.

(4.) It is a great salvation, if we consider the manner of its publication. God himself brought the first news of it to Adam, and did afterwards upon several occasions carry on the discovery, by adding to that first revelation, and giving new beams of light to it, as the various occasions

of the church did require, Heb. ii. 2, 3. But that which is most remarkable, and of greatest consideration, is, that the publication of this was a part of the work which an humbled God, while tabernacling amongst men, took to himself; he went about preaching salvation.

(5.) This salvation deserves to be called great, if we take a view of the great evils we are hereby liberated and saved from. (1.) Hereby we are saved from great pollutions. We are all by nature as black, as filthy as hell; we have by sin debased ourselves to hell; we are so filthy, that God, the holy God, cannot look upon us without abhorrence; we are abominated by the holy angels, and even by ourselves, when our eyes are opened. There is so much filthiness in every sinner, as is sufficient to make him lothe himself, if he but saw himself. Job, who had as great a testimony given him by God, the best judge, as ever man had, yet lothes and abhors himself, when God lets him see himself. Must not that be great filthiness that makes not only God, the holy God, lothe man; but even man, sinful and polluted man, abominate himself? And is it not a great salvation to be saved from so great filthiness? sure it is. It is a filthiness that the nitre and soap of human endeavours have been many times tried upon, but to no purpose. Nothing can wash out the stain, but the blood of God: and to be saved from such filthiness, is a mercy of no small consideration: it is indeed great salvation. (2.) It is salvation from the guilt of sin. Sin carries in it an obligation to punishment, Rom. viii. 1. It ties sin and punishment together; and consequently is like a strong chain whereby the sinner is bound to destruction, so fast that he cannot get away from it. He is tied to hell; and sure when one finds himself thus knit to destruction, he will think it a great salvation to be saved from it, to have this knot loosed. (3.) It is salvation from the dominion of sin. Sin is a great tyrant, and imposes a most heavy and intolerable yoke upon all its vassals. We may see what a tyrant it is, by the many tragical events with which the world is daily filled. We see some kingdoms soaked in blood, some families buried in contempt, some men ruined in their reputation, others in their bodies, others in their estates: and if we inquire who has done all this mischief, we shall find that sin has done it all. It has made one part of a nation imbrue their hands in their neighbor's blood; it has hurried men upon these foolish and hurtful practices, whereby they have ruined their families, their estates, their names, their souls, their bodies. Sure, then, salvation from the reign and dominion of this insufferable tyrant, deserves to be styled great salvation. (4.) It is salvation from the molesting power of the remainder of sin that dwells in believers: and this is great salvation. So grievous are the workings, stirrings, motions of this enemy, that it makes the children of God many times look upon themselves as wretched, and cry out with the apostle, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And to be freed from that which makes a man account himself miserable and wretched, is certainly a great salvation. (5.) It is salvation from the wrath of God; and how great a mercy is this? "Who knows the power of his wrath?" And who knows how great a deliverance it is to be saved from the wrath to come? Such only can who have their eyes opened, to see the danger they are in from the imminency of the whirlwind of the Lord's anger, that goes forth with fury, and falls with pain upon the

head of the wicked. (6.) It is salvation from Satan's slavery: and sure to be saved from his slavery, is a great salvation indeed. He "rules in the children of disobedience:" and where he reigns, he never treats one of his slaves better than he did that poor child, of whom we have an account in the evangelists. He takes them, and "tears them, and bruises them, throwing them sometimes into the fire and sometimes into the water," Matth. xvii. 14. Mark ix. 17. Luke ix. 39. He runs them into very different evils, fire and water, but equally destructive to their life. And to be saved from such treatment, from such an enemy, is surely a great salvation; and will easily be acknowledged such, by all who know how great a misery it is to be under such a yoke. (7.) It is salvation from the "sting of death," and from the "fear of death." We read of some that "all their lifetime have been in bondage through fears of death," Heb. ii. 15; where it is likewise declared a part of Christ's undertaking to deliver such: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Whoever takes a view of these evils, which this salvation and deliverance has a respect to, cannot but own it a great salvation.

(6.) To add no more considerations for the illustration of this property, it must be owned to be a great salvation, if we consider what are the advantages that follow upon our deliverance from these filthy evils mentioned. I only name a few of them. (1.) Instead of these robes which sinners are naturally clothed in, they are clad in garments of salvation, garments of righteousness. "I will," says the church, Isa. lxi. 10. "greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." (2.) This salvation has in it a title to a noble inheritance. Guilt is the sinner's, the unsaved wretch's title to wrath; it makes it sure to him; but such as are saved, are made sons upon their believing, John i. 12. "And if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. iii. 17. (3.) They who are partakers of this salvation, are put under the dominion of grace. They are not under sin, but under the dominion of grace, Rom. vi. 14; and where grace bears sway, there is indeed perfect liberty. Faith working by love is the spring of all the obedience they perform to these commands, which are not grievous, but on the contrary are pleasant, and have not only a great reward in the issue, but even in the time wherein obedience is performed to them; see Gal. v. 6. 1 John v. 3. Prov. iii. 17. Psal. xix. 11. (4.) The Spirit dwells in all believers, and abides with him for ever, 1 John iv. 13. Rom. viii. 9. And hereby relief is provided against that uneasiness that arises from the remainders of sin here; for "through the Spirit believers do mortify the deeds of the body, that so they may live," Rom. viii. 13. And by the abounding of the fruits of the Spirit, they are brought to that frame, that spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace, Rom. viii. 6; and not only is there, by the indwelling of the Spirit, provision thus made against the remaining power of indwelling sin here.

but moreover hereby there is assurance given of full freedom from it. The Spirit will at length entirely cleanse the soul: and he is the earnest of glory of that state where believers are entirely freed from sin, 2 Cor. v. 5. It is by him they are sealed to the day of their final and complete redemption from sin, in all its concernments, filth, guilt, reign, power, and being, Eph. iv. 30. (5.) Instead of wrath under which the sinner was lying, by this salvation he is brought into a state of favour and acceptance with God, through the beloved, Eph. i. 6. Instead of war with heaven, they have peace; for, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God," Rom. viii. 1. And of how great consideration this is, the Psalmist well understood, who, Psal. xxx. 5. tells us, "That in God's favour is life," and, Psal. lxxiii. 3. that his "loving kindness is better than life." (6.) Satan's slave is placed upon a throne by this salvation: and is this not a great privilege? Sure it is: and this is the privilege of all overcomers; and such shall all believers be; "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. (7.) Instead of feared death, everlasting life shall be the privilege of the nations of them that are saved, John iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;" and here we may hold. All words are for ever lost. Who can tell what a life this is? A life of God, a life of comfort, a life of promise in heaven; and such a life for ever. May we not conclude from the whole, that this salvation, which is the contrivance of so great wisdom, has so great an author as God, is brought about by so great means, proclaimed by so great a person as the only begotten of the Father, frees from so great evils, and entitles to so great blessings, is indeed a great salvation? We shall proceed now to a

2d Property of this salvation. As it is upon the accounts mentioned, and not a few others, a great salvation, so likewise is it a complete salvation. It is called salvation to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Now, the completeness of this salvation, we may take up in four particulars. (1.) It is salvation from all evils. It is not only salvation from many, from great evils, as we did at length make appear under the former head, but it is salvation from all evils. It extends to all sorts of evils. We might mention many sorts of evils; but they are all easily reducible to two moral evils: or sins, penal evils, or punishment. Now, this salvation extends to both. It is salvation from all sin: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 9. It is justification from all things, Acts xiii. 39. "Be it known to you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And if we be saved from all moral evils, salvation from all others follows in course. (2.) It is salvation from all degrees of all those evils. It might have extended to all sorts of evils, and yet not have comprehended a deliverance from all degrees of them: but it is complete in this respect; as the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, so it cleanseth from every degree; it cleanseth fully. As the Spirit of Christ is able to subdue all sin, so he is able to subdue all sin fully. In a word, Christ makes thorough work of it; and such as do believe shall be saved from all their fears, from all their

enemies, from all their sins, and all their sorrows; Christ will "present them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." No stain, no blemish, shall be left on them, before he has done with them. (3.) It is comprehensive of all spiritual blessings; nay, of every good thing. "God will give grace and glory, and he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11. And believers are said to be "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus," Eph. i. 3. (4.) It comprehends all these blessings in their perfection. While in this world, the enjoyments of the saints are not complete; but they shall be so ere it be long. Grace will ripen into glory. That which is in part will be done away, and that which is perfect will come in its room.

3dly, This is a suitable salvation. How suitable it is to God, we have hinted already; and therefore I shall only name a few things which may evince its congruity to such poor sinners as are convinced of their need of salvation.

(1.) This salvation is exceedingly suitable to such a poor sinner, because it is near. One that is in a great extremity, to tell him of a remedy in some far country, at a great distance, will rather increase than help his disquietment. Such a remedy, may he say, is sufficient; but how shall it be got? who will bring it to me? and may I not be dead and gone before it arrive? So might the convinced sinner say, did we tell him of a Saviour that were to be met withal in some remote country, or after the course of some years, his perplexity would hereby be increased. His case requires speedy relief; it will not admit of long delays: and this salvation is exactly adapted to his condition, as the apostle shows, Rom. x. 6—9. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ from above): or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This salvation is near in the offer; it is near in its advantages. As the offer brings it close home; so the advantage of it is presently to be obtained. The jailor soon got ease; and so may every convinced sinner, in the same method; he may obtain, if not present satisfaction, yet present safety.

(2.) This salvation in its terms is suited to the needs and desires of a convinced sinner. He cannot purchase salvation: therefore salvation freely offered is suitable to him. If money were required of such as come to the market of grace, the sinner would never look near it: but when all that need are bid come, and take and have all, without money and without price, then he finds a market to his mind, salvation according to his wish, perfectly such as he would have.

(3.) It is suitable in his nature to his wants. As it is salvation upon the very terms he wishes, so all the blessings he needs are to be had upon these terms. Needs he pardon? he may have it; needs he repentance? he may have it: in a word, if he needs grace or glory, he may have them.

(4.) The security offered is suitable to the very desires of such a one. The convinced sinner is now deeply sensible of the concern, mo

ment, and importance of salvation ; and therefore he would not willingly hazard it upon a small security. He would not venture so much upon some weak probability, he would have the highest security in this matter, which is of the highest importance. And what greater security can he desire for his salvation, than God's covenant and promise, confirmed by his oath ?

4thly, This salvation is called eternal salvation, Isa. xlv. 17. "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation ; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." And we are told, Heb. v. 9. "That Christ being made perfect through sufferings, is become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." It is eternal salvation upon a threefold account. (1.) It is eternal salvation in its design and contrivance, the fruit and product of everlasting love. The Father's drawing sinners, in time, into a compliance with the terms of salvation, is the fruit of everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. "The Lord appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (2.) It is everlasting salvation, because it is salvation from everlasting evils. "He that believes not shall be damned ;" that is, as the Spirit of God comments upon it elsewhere, "he shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power," 2 Thes. i. 9. (3.) It is eternal salvation, because it entitles to, and puts man in possession of, eternal blessings. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John iii. 36. Thus have we seen what this salvation is, in itself, and in its properties. We proceed,

VI. To demonstrate the truth of the doctrine, that such as do betake themselves by faith unto, or believe on, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall assuredly be saved. And this we make good,

First, From the eternal and immutable purpose of God, that he that believes shall be saved. Great contests there have been among Christians about the decrees of God ; but scarce ever any yet had the confidence to allege, that God had not decreed this. Such as will allow least to the decrees of God, are forced to own, that he has purposed in himself, that he that believes shall be saved ; and when God had purposed so, who can contradict, or who can make him fall short of whatever he has purposed ? Since it is unquestionable, from the revelation that God hath made of his will, that he has purposed the salvation of all that do believe, it must of necessity be so, that such shall infallibly be saved. Could any believer fall short of his happiness, of the salvation which God has purposed in himself to bestow on him, it must flow from one of two ; either a change in God's purpose, or God's falling short of his intent. But neither of the two can possibly be. (1.) As for God's purpose, it must of necessity be unchangeable, like himself : "He is God, and changes not," Mal. iii. 6. Should God change, he would lose his name, "I am that I am." Upon this ground it is, that the wise man says, Eccl. iii. 14. "I know that whatever God doth it shall be for ever." God is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," James i. 17. That man is changeable in his purpose, flows from his weakness, and from his ignorance of events. His purposes are founded upon a supposition, or at most a probability, that things shall be so and so ; and when things fall out

otherwise than was expected, man must suit his purposes to the state of things. But the matter is far otherwise with God, who doth not therefore purpose to act so and so, because he seeth such things will fall out; but things fall out so because God purposed in himself that they should so fall out. All things are wrought by him according to the counsel of his own will; and known to him are all his works from the beginning. Again, man changes his purpose, because he knows not at first what is best to be done: but the matter is not so with God. (2.) As for the event of the purpose, that must be infallible. God cannot fall short of his purpose, if we will take his own word on it: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever," Isa. xl. 8. And again, "I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xlvi. 9, 10. And well may he say he will do so, since none is able to resist his will; he that doth it must first grapple with Omnipotence. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isa. xiv. 27. "If he works, who can let?" Isa. xliii. 13. "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?" Dan. iv. 45. What is then purposed by God must be infallibly certain, that such as do by faith betake themselves to Jesus Christ, shall be saved.

Secondly, The faithfulness of God in the promise is engaged for it: so runs the promise, "He that believes shall be saved." When a man's purpose is not declared, he is indeed accountable to himself for any change or alteration of it, but none to others: but if he declare it openly, especially if he turn his purpose into a promise, in that case he is brought under a more public and solemn tie to stand firmly to what is engaged. So had this been a purpose concealed in the breast of God, if I may so speak; however he himself should have been engaged for its accomplishment, yet we had in that case nothing to say: but God by his promise makes himself a debtor; such is his condescension to his own creatures. God cannot suffer a believer to fall short of salvation, as matters are now stated, unless he thereby fall into disgrace and contempt: which is as impossible as it is for him to resign his Godhead. Certain it is, therefore, upon the account of the promise of God, that a lost sinner, betaking himself by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved. This will appear indeed of great weight, if it be considered, (1.) That there is not only a promise but a covenant. (2.) That this covenant has seals appended to it, for the ratification of it. (3.) That Christ is the surety of this covenant. (4.) That all the blessings promised are bought by Christ at no lower rate than that of his own blood. (5.) What he has purchased he made over in a testamentary way, by way of legacy, to believers. (6.) This testament being confirmed by the death of the Testator, there is no altering of it. (7.) The Holy Spirit, if I may so speak, is left executor of his latter will: therefore it is utterly impossible that any believer should miss of salvation. These things we have only named, because we hasten to the improvement of this truth; which we shall come to, after we have handled a

Third argument for proof of the truth under consideration, and that

is taken from the experience of such as do believe. And because this argument is, it may be, less understood, therefore I shall insist somewhat the more largely upon it. That I may prove it certain that believers are saved, from experience, I shall inquire, *1st*, What it is that such as do believe experience? *2dly*, How we know that they do so? for their experience signifies nothing to us, unless it be made known in such a way as may give it some weight.

As to the *1st*, we say, (1.) All believers, at death, do attain the full possession of this great, complete, suitable, and eternal salvation: they enter into rest, being conducted safe to glory, by the glorious Captain of his people's salvation. But this is not that which we principally design to insist upon, as an evidence of the certainty of the salvation of such as do believe. Wherefore we say,

(2.) That such as do believe, even in this life, have some experience of this salvation, upon their believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not say, indeed, that all believers have the same degrees of experience, or can give alike distinct account of their experiences: but this we say, that all who do believe, upon their believing, have some experience; and such as are diligent, and do carefully improve that spirit which is given them, whereby they may know the things that are freely given them of God, may understand, in some measure, if not all, yet most of the experiences we shall mention. Ye may easily understand, from what has been at great length discoursed to you, that this salvation comprehends a deliverance from evil, and a grant of all that is good. Now, we shall name some experiences that believers, upon their believing, obtain, both of the one and of the other.

[1.] Then, such as do by faith receive Jesus Christ, upon their believing, have a gracious experience of a begun deliverance from wrath. Whereas, before their believing, they were under fears of wrath, and saw themselves in imminent danger of inevitable ruin, so that they were much disquieted; now, upon their believing, they find something of a blessed calm. True it is, indeed, they do not always presently find rest, full rest I mean; yet, upon their reception of Christ, there is ever some beginnings of rest, and somewhat of a begun deliverance from cruciating and tormenting fears, which formerly did appear intolerable. The case of a believer, at such a time, may be like that of a man, who, falling over a dreadful precipice, gets hold of something which he is sure is able to support him; such a one, though he be in some degree free from that dreadful fear he was under, may yet be under some apprehensions of danger from his own inability to hold the grip he has gotten. Just so is it with a poor convinced sinner: at some times, before Christ is discovered, he is in the most lamentable case imaginable; he finds himself falling headlong into ruin and misery, and this frights him terribly; he sees the pit beneath him, and finds himself hastening thither; and therefore is in a dreadful consternation, while there is "nothing but a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation:" while he is in this case, Christ is discovered to him; he sees him sufficient to save him, and understands on what terms he may have him; he is pleased with them, and lays hold on Christ; and thence there ensue some beginnings of rest, though he may still be in some fears that he may lose the grip; and this begun

deliverance from the fears of wrath, is a pledge of that full and complete freedom which he has ground to expect.

[2.] Sinners, upon their believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, have some experience of begun salvation from the dominion of sin. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes them free, in some measure, from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. I know, indeed, there may be greater complaints of sin after believing than ever, and its power may be felt more than formerly; yet every one that truly doth believe, has some experience of a begun deliverance from the reign and dominion of sin. However sin may make more stir in the soul, yet it has not so much power as formerly. Now there is not that willing compliance with it as formerly there was in all its commands: now its title is disputed, its commands are rejected: and when any of them are complied withal, there is a force put upon the soul in its so doing.

[3.] They experience some beginnings of a deliverance from the guilt and filth of sin in their approaches to God. Before, when they heard of God, they were, like Adam, ready to run away and hide themselves; they were afraid to look him in the face: but now they begin to feel some more confidence in their approaches to God. They draw near, and are not so frightened; nay, they have some hopes as to the issue of these their approaches to God. These and many such experiences of a begun salvation from evils have all believers, if they would be at pains to observe them.

[4.] They likewise have some experiences of the freedom of Christ's subjects. They find a freedom in the service of God; it becomes natural and easy to them. They find not obedience so hurtful as once they thought it; nay, now they find a delight and refreshment in it, which is indeed something of the beginnings of that satisfaction with God's likeness, which is to be completed fully in heaven.

[5.] They experience many times the beginnings of heaven in some refreshing tastes of the gracious communications and intimations of God's love to their souls. In fine, all of them, upon their believing, do experience, in less or in more, Christ as the hope of glory in their hearts. Some dawns of hope there are in the darkest and most disconsolate believer that lives: for where there is no hope, there can be no use of means; it is hope of success that is the spring of action.

These and many such experiences do even the weakest believers some time or other find. That they are not more clearly discerned, to the comfort of such as have them, is, past all peradventure, in a great measure owing to their own negligence and want of observation. Now these things are evidences of the truth under consideration. When sinners, upon their believing, do experience the beginnings of that salvation which God has promised them, they may comfortably, and without any hesitation, wait for its completion, expecting firmly, that he who has begun that work will complete it; that he who has begun the accomplishment of his promises, will in due time fully accomplish them. Now, these experiences being of no use for proving the truth to others, unless they can be known satisfyingly by them, we shall,

2dly, Show, in a word, how we come to know that believers do find such things upon their believing. And this we do,

(1.) By the account we have of the experiences of believers in the

word of God. To go no further than the text, who more frightened, who more terribly shaken, and under greater horror, than the jailor, when he is trembling and putting the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Well, what becomes of him afterwards, when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ? Look to the 34th verse of this chapter, and there we shall find him rejoicing and believing. The like account have we of those who were "pricked in their hearts, and cried out, Men and brethren, what must we do?" Acts ii. 37. As perplexed as they then were, yet, upon their believing, the state of their affairs was perfectly altered; for "they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people," ver. 46, 47.

(2.) We may know this, as from the testimony of God, so from the testimony of believers in our day. Though there be but few, yet we hope there are not wanting some, who will readily and cheerfully give in their testimony to the same truth, and own, that upon their believing, they have had some experience of the things mentioned, and of not a few which we have not mentioned.

(3.) Though they should hold their peace, yet we might even with our eyes see the truth of what is asserted. Have we not sometimes seen some graceless and even profane wretches, who have been mad upon their own ways, stopped in their progress and career? Has not the Lord shaken them, and filled them with his terrors? and has not this course of believing calmed them? Have they not visibly been delivered from these fears of wrath, which had gone to such a degree? Has it not been clearly seen, that they were freed from that dominion of sin, under which they formerly lived? Surely these things are obvious proofs, that, upon believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, such persons have been made partakers of some beginnings of this great salvation, and that as an earnest of the whole. Several other things might have been added for proof of this great truth: but, passing them, we shall now come to make some practical improvement of this great truth.

In the improvement of this truth, we shall first draw some general doctrinal references; and then proceed to trial, which will lead us into a more close and particular application.

Is it so, then, that a convinced sinner, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall assuredly be saved? Then,

1. We may hence infer, That faith is a most valuable blessing. Well might the apostle call it precious faith, 1 Pet. i. 1; for not only is it precious in itself, but it is unspeakably so in respect of its consequences. It, like a chain, draws Christ and all his purchase after it: it is big with many and great mercies. There are great and precious promises fraught with the great and precious blessings of the gospel, nay, with Christ himself; and precious faith lays hold upon the promises of life that now is, and of that which is to come, of grace and glory, and makes them all ours.

2. We may safely hence infer likewise, that the preaching of the word is a great blessing; since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The whole of this the apostle plainly enough declares, Rom. x. 13. "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

3. Then we may infer, that such as do believe, whatever their circumstances may be at present, are in an unspeakably happy condition. They have an interest in the great salvation; and what losses will not this compensate and make up? How rich are they who have heaven, and all the means leading to it, as theirs? They have a good title to, and shall at length be actually possessed of, that rich inheritance of the saints in light, James ii. 5, "Hearken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

4. Assurance of salvation is attainable. If salvation be sure upon our believing, then we may be fully assured of salvation: for one may know certainly whether he believes or not, whether he be content to accept of and close with the Lord Jesus Christ upon his own terms. This is not only knowable, but it may be more easily discerned than most do apprehend. Were we but with any measure of seriousness and concern, turning our eyes inward, we could not but know how our hearts stand affected toward Christ, and the gospel-method of salvation; but of this more afterwards.

5. Perseverance in faith is not the condition of salvation, or at least, that which founds our title to it: for whoever believes shall be saved. If once a person believes, then he has a right given him by the promise of God to eternal salvation. The promise of God doth not run thus, Believe, and if ye persevere in believing, then ye shall be saved; but, Believe, and ye shall be saved. Once lay hold on and accept of Jesus Christ for salvation, and then saved ye shall be.

6. We may safely infer, from the doctrine insisted upon, that unbelief is self-murder, and that of the worst sort. It murders the soul eternally. Hence it is, that it is said to be a rejecting the counsel of God against one's self, Luke vii. 30. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves;" that is, to their own ruin: and so it may be said of every unbeliever: he rejects the counsel of God to his own destruction and ruin. But these things we only mention.

We now proceed to improve this doctrine for trial. Is it so, that it is certain, that a convinced sinner accepting of, or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall assuredly be saved? Then all who would be saved are nearly concerned to try whether they do believe or not. And that I may stir you up to this duty, I shall lay before you some few considerations. And,

1. Consider the moment and importance of the matter. It is a trial whereon not your worldly estate, nor any other petty temporal concern hangs; but your life lies upon it, and that even the life of your souls. When we bid you try, whether ye believe or not, it is as much as if we bade you try whether ye shall be damned or not. Unbelief is the damning sin, by way of eminency: all other sins, without this, will not, cannot damn those who live under the gospel; but this alone will; for "he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith, on the other hand, will save. God has tacked faith and salvation together; and it passes the power of all the devils in hell, or men upon earth, or sin in the heart to break the link. Now, is not that a matter of the greatest concernment? Is not this a question which is worth your while to be satisfied about, whether ye shall be saved, or whether ye shall be damned?

2. Consider that ye had need to try, whether ye have faith or not; "for all men have not faith," 2 Thes. iii. 2. Indeed I confess, if all that live under the gospel had faith, there were less occasion for trying it: but since it is quite otherwise, since there are some men, even within the verge of the church, who have not faith, every one of you is concerned, the matter being of such consequence, to try, whether ye be amongst those wicked and unreasonable men who want it, and so shall be damned or not. Nay further,

3. There are but a very few among the swarms of professors who have faith; and therefore certainly ye are nearly concerned to try, whether ye may be among these few. Our Lord tells us, that few shall be saved, Luke xiii. 23. "Many are called but few are chosen," Matth. xxii. 14. Therefore there are few believers; for all believers are saved and chosen; and none shall believe but they who are "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Now, is it not the great concernment of every one of you to be putting the question to yourselves, Am I among the few who believe, and shall be saved? or am I not? If we should tell you, that before ye go from this house, God would strike some one of this assembly dead, every one would be anxious to know if he were the person: and now, when we tell you, that the greater part of this assembly have nothing betwixt them and hell but that brittle thing life, were it not very proper that every one should put the question, Am I among the few that believe and shall be saved? or among the many who believe not, and consequently shall be damned? See Isa. liii. 1.

4. Consider, That many have been deceived in this matter. They have thought that they had faith; and others, it is like, have thought so concerning them; and yet it has been found quite otherwise in the end. The Laodiceans thought themselves "rich, and increased with goods, and that they stood in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 18; while in the mean time they were "poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked." And our Lord tells us, "not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matth. vii. 21. Think ye that ye do believe? Well, others have so thought likewise, and have been mistaken; and may it not be so with you? and if it may, have ye not reason to put the matter to trial? Especially considering,

5. That a deceit or mistake in this matter is of the worst consequence imaginable. I might enumerate not a few of the bad, destructive, and ruining consequences of it: but I shall only name three. (1.) It makes men neglect an opportunity that is never to be recovered again. Opportunity is drawn with a hairy forefront, and bald behind: and sure, if in any thing the emblem was significant, it is here. Men, while under the gospel dispensation of mercy, have an opportunity of making peace with God, and of securing their eternal concerns; but if once time be gone, then there is no more access for sinners to treat with God about this matter. Now, a mistaken apprehension, that one does believe, when really he does not so, makes him slight this golden opportunity, this choice season, which can never be retrieved. Many think they believe already, and so put all exhortations by themselves, as belonging to others, and not to them. (2.) This mistake exposes them to a confounding dis-

appointment. It buoys them up with hopes of heaven and happiness, fills them with big expectations of glory, and then hurls them down headlong into the blackest despair, into inevitable misery. (3.) This mistake brings upon them eternal and intolerable, as well as irreparable misery. It must of necessity plunge them headlong into the pit whence there is no redemption. It is not one's apprehending himself to have faith, but it is faith itself that saves; and the want of it inevitably damns.

6. Consider that it is your interest to put this matter to a fair trial. be the issue what it will. Some of you, it is like, may think otherwise; ye may, possibly, apprehend, that it is your interest to sleep on in this pleasant dream, that ye have faith; because if once ye put it to a trial, and it be found that ye want it, then ye must take up with that melancholy conclusion, that ye must be damned. To such I only say in a word, (1.) This plea were something reasonable, if it were possible for you to sleep on in this dream; but this cannot be so. You will be obliged, even though unwilling, to see and know, before it be long, whether ye have faith or not. (2.) Ye might say something for yourselves, if it were impossible for those who want faith ever to come by it; but this cannot be said. But further, I add, either you indeed have faith, or ye want it: and which soever of the two be said, it is certainly your interest to put the matter to a trial.

If ye want faith, then it is your interest to know so much; for. (1.) One of the greatest impediments will be taken out of the way of your believing. Nothing so great a let to faith, as a groundless conceit that one has it already. (2.) Hereby likewise ye will be helped to see the necessity of faith. (3.) And this will put you upon the diligent use of the means: and who can tell but the issue will be comfortable, and what is wanting may be made up through the mercy of God. If ye continue under this deceit, ye are certainly ruined: if ye see your mistake, ye have at least a peradventure for happiness.

Again, if ye have faith, it is past all doubt your interest to bring it to trial: For, (1.) Before ye try and find that ye have faith, ye want the comfort of it. Safety indeed results from the being of faith: for he that believes shall be saved: but solid peace and comfort results from the knowledge of our own faith. While we know not that we have faith, we know not but the wrath of God may be abiding on us; we know not but we may be on the way to destruction; we know not but the Lord may turn us next moment into the pit: and what comfort, what peace, can people have in such a condition? (2.) While we know not that we have faith, God gets not the honour that is his unquestionable due from all believers. As faith is his gift, so we are indispensably obliged to be thankful to him for it: but this we cannot be till once we know that we have faith. Thus God is robbed of the glory due to his name: nay, many times he is signally dishonoured, by believers denying his goodness to them, and refusing to acknowledge what he has wrought in them and for them. In one word, it is certain, sooner or later, all must be resolved in this question, whether it be our interest to be resolved now, when there is access to rectify what is found amiss, and to get what upon search is found wanting: or afterwards when there is no place for altering any thing in your condition.

7. The authority of God should in this matter prevail with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" God commands expressly, nay, doubles his commands to this duty: whereby he at once checks our backwardness to the duty, and insinuates the importance and necessity of it.

8. To add no more, consider that it is a strong evidence of the want of faith, to neglect an inquiry after it. Such as will not judge themselves, have reason to fear that they shall be condemned of the Lord. Such as have faith, will prize it highly: and such as do prize it, will think it worth their while to inquire, whether they have it or not.

Since, then, we have made it appear, to be of such near and deep concernment to you all to try this matter, I shall now for this end,

1. Set by some sorts of persons among you, who without all doubt are unbelievers.

2. I shall show some false marks by which some do deceive themselves.

3. I shall lay down some true marks whereby ye may know certainly that ye do believe. Now, of these things in order.

First, We say, we shall set by some persons who are, past all peradventure, unbelievers. There are some men whose sins go before them into judgment; some unbelievers who have their name writ upon their forehead. It is needless to talk of applying marks to them. We need not bid a drunkard or a swearer try themselves whether they believe or not: we may tell them plainly they do not believe, and that therefore they are under the wrath of God. Therefore, before we proceed to deal with close hypocrites, whose sins do follow after, we shall set aside some, who without all doubt want faith, and therefore, if they continue in that estate, shall be damned. And,

1. All of you who are grossly ignorant, are to be reckoned among this sort of persons. How many are there in this house, who are grossly ignorant of God, of Jesus Christ, and of themselves, who know no more of these things which do belong to their peace, than if they had been born in Turkey! We are grieved to find such ignorance among you. Well, O ignorant sinners! we tell you, in God's name, ye are unbelievers. If we should ask you, when we come to deal with you on a sick-bed or a death-bed, do ye believe? It is strange to think with what confidence you would tell, you do believe. But flatter not your own selves; if you are grossly ignorant, believers you are not, you cannot be: for, (1.) None can believe, unless they have a new heart, and a new spirit given them; faith being a fruit of the Spirit in a renewed man, and not a fruit of the flesh, or of a corrupt unrenewed nature. Now, wherever this new heart is, there is of necessity the knowledge of God; for a new heart is a "heart to know God," Jer. xxiv. 17. (2.) None can believe who know not their need of Christ. "The whole need not a physician, but the sick." Nor will such as do not know their disease, ever inquire after one that can cure it. What occasion should persons who are ignorant of their own misery find for a Saviour? And how can they prize a Saviour, who know not his worth? And how can they embrace him, who neither know that he is offered, nor the terms whereon he is so? Knowledge is so necessary to faith, that it is im-

possible it should be without it: it is expressed by knowledge, Isa. v. 3. "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many." It is so much allied to it, that the working faith in conversion is expressed by a "translation out of darkness into God's marvellous light." Lay aside, then, O ignorant sinner! all pretences to faith. We, in the name, and by the authority of our great Lord and Master, do discharge such of you as are thus grossly ignorant to make any pretensions to faith; for ye have no reason to do so, ye have no warrant; and therefore ye do it cross to the mind and will of God. Now, if all who belong to this one sort in this congregation were set by to a corner, how great a multitude of unbelievers, old and young, would we see? And O what a sad sight would it be, to see you set by yourselves, and all of you carrying upon you the stamp and superscription of Satan, ready to be seized by him as his prisoners, and thrust into the pit?

2. All who are openly profane, who live in the habitual and customary practice of open and notorious sins, are to be numbered amongst this sort, who, past all peradventure, are unbelievers. The scriptures are very plain in asserting this. What is unbelief, if not to deny God? And sure the scripture reckons such as live thus, deniers of God. It is said of such, that "they profess to know God, but in their works do deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 16. And what can be more express to this purpose, than what the apostle James discourses at great length, chap. ii. A set of men there were in his day who were profane, but yet had high pretences to faith. These the apostle there smartly reproves, and endeavours to convince them, that the devils may have as good a claim to faith as they have. "Thou believest," says he, ver. 19, 20, "that there is one God, thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." And ver. 26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." And a dead faith is no faith at all. Lay aside, therefore, O profane wretch! your pretences to faith. Will ye lie, steal, swear, and commit uncleanness, and yet pretend to faith? Will not our God be avenged of such hellish impudence as this? Sure he will. But to be somewhat more particular, we do,

(1.) Charge such of you as are customary swearers, to lay aside all pretences to faith. Ye are certainly unbelievers; and as sure as the eternal God lives, shall be damned, if ye continue in this your impiety. Our lot is cast in an unhappy age, wherein men are grown intolerably bold in blaspheming the name of God: nay, not only so, but not a few glory in their shame, and boast of it, that they can out-do others by swearing more and greater oaths! Be astonished, O heavens! Be ye very desolate! Has any of the nations served their gods so? The poor Americans, who worship the devil, will not treat him so ill, as a set of men called Christians, nay more, reformed Christians, Protestants, do the great God of heaven. O what a wonder of divine patience is it, that God does not dash down the world about the ears of such sinners, that he sends them not alive into hell! O what hearts! what trembling hearts will these men have, when, ere it be long, they shall find God shaking the earth terribly, when he "comes out of his place to punish them?" Such monsters as have torn God's name by hellish blasphemies,

how will they look, when the almighty God shall grasp them with his omnipotent arms, and "tear them in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver them," none that dare interpose in their behalf? What hearts will they have, who by their monstrous oaths have made God's jealousy burn against them, when a little hence his wrath will flame so high, as to dissolve the elements with fervent heat, and pour down the visible heavens like so much boiling lead upon the heads of such God-daring sinners? Would to God there were no such monsters in this congregation; none such hearing me this day, who boast of and glory in their swearing. If there be any such monsters here, I do, by the authority of the great God, charge such either to repent of this impiety, or to be gone, and leave this assembly. I know no place meet for such a one but hell. But it is like some of you may bless yourselves in your own hearts, when ye hear such things, and say, ye do not swear such monstrous and horrid oaths. Ay, but if ye swear habitually the lesser oaths, we bid you, in the Lord's name and authority, lay aside all pretences to faith.—Some of you can swear by your faith upon every turn, and yet pretend to faith in Christ. They who have faith, will not dare to swear by it. And such as do customarily swear by faith, or by conscience, I dare assert to be unbelievers. A believer in Christ will not make so light of precious faith, as to baffle it upon every occasion; nor will he dare to make that an idol which is a grace; the chief glory whereof is, to abase the creature, and to exalt God. To swear by faith, or by conscience, is to put them in God's stead; and that is an indignity which God will by no means bear with, for he has said, he "will not give his glory to another." This sin is become so common and customary, that there is but little hope of persuading people to leave it, unless God by a strong hand do it. But since we have occasion to speak of swearing, I shall only add a few words to such of you as are guilty. (1.) God has taken the punishment of swearers into his own hand. Men commonly let such easily pass; but God has said, he "will not hold them guiltless." (2.) It is a sin that brings ruin not only on particular persons, but upon families. "The flying roll that is twenty cubits long, and ten cubits broad, and full of curses, enters into the house of the swearer, and destroys it with the timber and stones thereof, and every one that is guilty shall be cut off," Zech. v. 3, 4. (3.) It is one of the sins that brings desolating calamities upon nations, and makes the land mourn, Hos. iv. 2, 3. (4.) So hateful is this sin to God, that he threatens such as know any to be guilty of it, and conceal the sin, Lev. v. 1. "And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he doth not utter it, then shall he bear his iniquity." It is not enough to forbear swearing, but we must prosecute the guilty.

(2.) Unclean persons, of which there are too many in this congregation, are all to be reckoned amongst the unbelievers. The defiled and the unbelieving are well put together by the apostle, Tit. i. 15. The works of the flesh are enumerated, Gal. v. 19, &c.; and uncleanness leads the van. Such of you as live in uncleanness, are past all doubt in the flesh, yet under the power of unbelief; for they that do believe or are in Christ Jesus, "have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof," Gal. v. 24.

(3.) Drunkards, in vain do ye pretend to faith: ye are unbelievers,

and shall have your part eternally with them. If ye look the forecited list, ye will find your name amongst the rest. Ye are not in Christ Jesus; for they who are in Christ Jesus do not "walk after the flesh, but after the spirit," Rom. viii. 1. Now, to this class of unbelievers belong, (1.) Such as do spend and habitually throw away their time in ale-houses. Against these there is a woe denounced, Isa. v. 11, 12. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night till wine inflame them. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." Some, it may be, will not be put by themselves with drink, yet they spend their time ordinarily in the ale-house. Such persons are to be reckoned amongst these unbelievers, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (2.) Such as do abuse themselves so with drink, that they lose the use of their reason: A sin so abominable, and more than beastly, that it is a wonder how a man can be guilty of it; it being such an evil that we cannot find the like of it among the beasts. (3.) Such as go to that height, as to glory in their drinking, against them God pronounces a woe, Isa. v. 21. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." (4.) A sort of sinners that seem to out-do all the rest, belong to this class, and that is, such as have the heaven-daring boldness, to tempt others to get drunk, not fearing the curse of God that is denounced against such, Hab. ii. 15. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makes him drunken also, that thou mayest look upon his nakedness." God threatens, in the following verse of that chapter, that the cup of his right hand, the cup of his fury, shall be turned into such. He will make them eternally to drink of the cup of his wrath, yea, the very dregs thereof. Whoever they are in this congregation that belong to this sort of men, we charge you to lay aside all claim to faith. Unbelievers you are: and if ye do flatter yourselves that ye do believe notwithstanding, ye but deceive yourselves, and ruin your own souls.

(4.) All liars are scored by as unbelievers. They are not the children of God, but of the devil. They have his name upon their forehead, and do exactly resemble him who was a liar from the beginning. They have no likeness to the God of truth. Therefore every one that loveth and maketh a lie shall be excluded from heaven, Rev. xxii. 15. In fine, to this sort belong thieves, murderers, evil-speakers, deceivers, Sabbath-breakers, &c. All these are openly profane, and so, past all peradventure, unbelievers. We need not endeavour to find them out by secret search, when these evidences are to be seen and observed by every one. But, besides the grossly ignorant and openly profane,

3. The habitual neglecters of secret duties, particularly of prayer, are to be set aside from the number of believers. Prayer is, if I may so speak, the very breath of the new creature; as soon as it is created, it prays; so that where there is an habitual neglect of secret prayer, there is no faith. Are there not here some of you, who will rise from your bed in the morning, and go to your work, and never bow a knee to God; and just so leave it at night again, and have never one check from your conscience for all this? If there be any amongst you who

do neglect prayer, we charge you to lay aside all pretences to faith in Christ.

4. All that expect to get heaven by their own prayers and other duties, are to be set aside as unbelievers. How many of this congregation are there, who, when interrogated as to their hopes of heaven, have nothing else to found their hopes upon, but their religious performances? O wretched ignorance! your own duties are thus made your saviour. A certain and sure proof that ye do not believe.

These, and not a few others, are unquestionably unbelievers. Now set aside the grossly ignorant, the profane, the neglecters of secret prayer, and such as rest upon their performances for heaven, we fear the greatest part of this assembly might be set aside. Having now named some sorts of persons, who, without all doubt are unbelievers, and therefore have no lot, no portion in Jesus Christ; and who, if they continue in that state, shall have their portion assigned them in utter darkness, with hypocrites and unbelievers; we shall proceed,

Secondly, To take notice of some false marks, whereby people judge of themselves, and conclude they have faith, while indeed they have it not.

1. It will not be a sufficient proof that ye have faith, that ye think so, and confidently say so. This is it that many of you build upon, your own confident assertion of it, upon no other account, but only that ye think so. When we ask you, Do ye believe? you will readily reply, Yes indeed we believe; and if we further put you to it, as to the ground of your assertion, we shall find nothing but the same thing told us over again with confidence: we believe, God forbid we should not believe. Nay, it may be some will say, "Though he slay us we will trust in him." This we have had told us from persons who were as far from faith as the Turks are. We entreat you, in the fear of the Lord, hazard not your souls upon a strong fancy that ye have faith; for we assure you, in the Lord's name, that this is a false mark: for, (1.) Where there is least faith, there is usually most confidence. Where faith is, it occasions a holy jealousy, which others know nothing of; faith makes such discoveries of the deceitfulness of the heart, as makes the soul suspect itself. (2.) Our Lord positively says, "That not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is not every one that thinks and says he believes, that will be owned as a believer. Ye think ye believe; ye say ye do so: well, others have both thought and said so, who yet are in hell. Our Lord tells us in Matth. vii. 21, 22. that many will meet with a fearful disappointment: he will not own them, nor their faith, but send them and it together to the pit, telling them that he knows them not. But,

2. Some think they believe, because they have no doubts, and never had any, about the truth of the gospel, their pardon, and acceptation with God, through Jesus Christ. But take heed to yourselves, that ye do not flatter yourselves upon this ground, for it is a false one. Ye say, ye never doubted, therefore ye believe. But,

(1.) What if we should say that the contrary follows? Ye never had doubts, therefore ye do not believe. We might say so on better grounds: for want of doubts may flow, [1.] From unconcernedness about the truth of the gospel. Persons hear of a thousand things, and

scarce are at pains to be anywise satisfied, whether they be true or false; because they are not concerned. If we hear that there is a man in America that has a vast estate, and a huge revenue, we will never scruple the truth of it, especially if they who tell it are but of ordinary credit; but if we understood, that we could never be maintained, unless we got a share of that estate, and that the owner is willing to impart to us what we needed for our use, we would soon begin to be a little more scrupulous upon the point, and would not believe the report so easily, but be apt to entertain a thousand suspicious thoughts about every circumstance of the matter. Just so it is with the most part of men and women in the matter before us: they do not know their need of Christ; they do not know but they may be able to do their own business well enough without him; therefore they are not at pains to inquire narrowly, and to be satisfied as to the truth of the gospel-report: they give it credit, from an easy credulity, because they do not know their own concernment in it, but were they once satisfied about their concernment in it, they would have more doubts about it. This we see plainly to be the case of these, when God awakens their conscience. While they sleep on in their natural security, and see not their need of Christ, they can easily believe, as they think, the truth of what the gospel reports concerning him; but as soon as they are awakened, and begin to know how much depends upon it, then they find that doubts do arise. [2.] Want of doubt may flow from a "profound ignorance of the mystery of the gospel." Ignorant persons have not their thoughts exercised about Christ, the excellency of his person, the necessity of his death, and of the virtue and efficacy of it, as meritorious of pardon, and satisfactory to the justice of God; and therefore see no difficulty in giving a sort of an assent to, or rather is not questioning the truth of, the gospel. And then, [3.] As to persons' confident reliance on Christ, or believing without any scruple, that they shall be saved by him, this flows from ignorance of God's holiness, and their own sinfulness. They think sin no great matter, and therefore think God may be soon reconciled to them. From these, and such other like causes, may it proceed, that ye want doubts, and that ye are so easily satisfied about this matter; and from the consideration of these causes, it is apparent, that want of doubts as to the truth of the gospel-report, and want of difficulty in the believing of your advantage by it, is rather a sign that ye want faith, than that ye have it. Further, it is plain, that where persons have just impressions of their own sinfulness, and of God's holiness; of their own meanness, of God's greatness; of the hateful nature of sin, and the stated aversion and irreconcilable hatred God bears to it; it will occasion difficulty in believing the truth of any way wherein a sinner may be admitted to the enjoyment of God, and consequently some difficulty in hazarding a reliance upon it; considering that there is naturally much darkness and weakness in the mind of man since the fall. But, passing this consideration, we say,

(2.) It is evident, that a great many, who have no doubts, are yet unquestionably unbelievers, because they live in gross ignorance, and in the habitual practice of known sins. In one word, ye who think ye have faith, because ye have no doubts, are like to deceive your own souls; for I make no doubt, there are not a few in hell roaring out of their

intolerable pain, who never doubted but they had faith, and should be saved, till sad experience convinced them that they were damned.—The scripture, and the experience of the people of God in all ages, makes it plain, and incontestably evident, that they who do truly believe, find difficulty in doing so ; and they who never found any, have never seen that “the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” They are the whole persons that need not, and will never come to the physician. Where there is any thing of the carnal mind remaining, there will be still found difficulty in believing ; unbelief will still be faith's neighbour ; and where there is any thing of God's marvellous light in the soul, this unbelief, and aversion to believing, will in more or less be discerned.

3. Some conclude that they themselves and others have faith, because they are moral, and civil, and blameless in their external conversation. Nothing more common than to call a civil moral man, a good man, and to conclude all is right with him. This is a mark whereby many judge, and judge amiss, of their own estate, and of the estate of others : for it is one that will not abide the test of God's word ; if we weigh it in the balance of God's sanctuary, we must write *Tekel* upon it. We grant indeed, (1.) That it is very desirable to see men moral and blameless in their conversation. It is a thing praiseworthy, because of its usefulness among men : and it were to be wished that there were more of it in the world ; therefore we shall say nothing to discourage any from a blameless walk. (2.) We grant that immorality or profaneness is a sure mark of the want of faith. But because profane and immoral wretches do not believe, we must not therefore conclude, that they who are not thus immoral do believe. For, notwithstanding of what has been said, we say, [1.] That a man may be blameless, sober, and civil, as to his external conversation, who is so far from faith, that he may be hatching in his mind the most abominable evils : pride may reign there, ambition, worldly-mindedness, envy, discontent, and the like. There are two sorts of lusts spoken of by the apostle, Ephes. ii. 3. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Here the apostle gives us to understand, that there are desires or lusts of the mind, as well as of the flesh ; and the fulfilling the desires of the mind, or of the flesh, proves a man a child of wrath, and so void of faith. The civil moral man, it may be, fulfils not the one, but he may be fulfilling the other, and so perish eternally. [2.] So far is a moral civil walk from faith, or from being a sign of faith, that it has been found in many heathens, who never heard tell of faith, but perished in heathen darkness, quite ignorant of Christ, and the way of salvation by him. [3.] So far is it from being a sign of faith, that in many it has been found to be a sad hinderance to faith ; inasmuch as they have abused it so far as to lay weight upon it, as did the proud Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. The eyes of thousands are so dazzled with their own blamelessness, that they can see no need of the righteousness of Christ : and this is destructive eternally to their souls. Believe it, that a moral, civil, and blameless man in his external walk, may be an unbeliever, and may be damned. A profane man walks openly and avowedly, as it were, on the road to the pit ; and, like So-

lomon's simple man, says to every one, that he is a fool : but a civil man may be going the same road ; and if a man have no more, he is surely in the road to eternal damnation, as well as the other ; he goes only, if I may so speak, in a cleaner path to the pit, but will as certainly come thither : O that we could get that fond conceit banished the world, that there is no more required to make a man a Christian but morality. Flatter not yourselves ; this is not faith ; I assure you, you will be made to see so one day to your cost.

4. Others have some awakenings, by some common touches and motions of the Spirit of God, and therefore conclude that they believe, and have faith ; especially if there ensue any thing like peace after them. The occasion of this mistake is that when the Lord works the work of faith with power in the soul, he begins his work by convincing men of sin. But it is a very perverse and dangerous consequence, to conclude from thence, that faith is where there are convictions. For, (1.) The worst of men may have, and have had convictions. Judas, Pilate, Simon Magnus, and a great many others, had bosoms full of convictions ; and yet, past all peradventure, were unbelievers, and that of the worst sort. (2.) Ill men may grow worse by convictions. Many are so far from being bettered by them, from being brought to Christ by them, that they are put further from him, and that several ways. 1. Some by their convictions are driven from gross sins to more secret sins, from profaneness to morality, and hold there ; and their last ease is, in several respects, worse than their first ; as is plain from what has been discoursed above. 2. Some, by means of conviction, have the sins of their whole life aggravated more grievously than otherwise they would have been. Sins against light are the greatest of sins ; and some continue all their life long under a continual vicissitude of sin and conviction ; they hold on in sin, though they have from time to time dreadful throws of conviction. Some persons we have known this way exercised all their life, yea, persons of great knowledge, who have been so far from being beat from their sins by convictions, that they have only served to aggravate and enhance their guilt. 3. Some others are so far from being led to Christ by their convictions, that they make a Christ of their convictions, and conclude all is well with them, because they are convinced, and so seek no further. They think God loves them, because his Spirit deals with them ; little minding that God's Spirit strove many a year with the old world, and then destroyed them at last. 4. Others there are, who, by despising and quenching convictions, pave the way for themselves to open profaneness, and a boundless liberty in sinning : for by hardening themselves under convictions, they provoke God to give them up to the ways of their own hearts, because when "they know God, they do not worship him as God, therefore he gives them up to vile affections," Rom. i. 21. &c. This was the unhappy case of many in the heathen world ; and I may say is the case of many in the Christian world. Likewise, 5. Convictions many times terminate in dreadful despair ; and hurry men headlong into hell, instead of bringing them into the way of heaven, driving them to the devil, when they should come to Christ. Thus it fared with Judas and some others.

In fine, we entreat you do not flatter yourselves ; convictions are no good sign of faith. I know some are so ignorant of God, and of this

work of the Spirit of God, that they are apt to mock and deride such as the Lord brings to a conviction of sin, as mad, or at least melancholy. To such I say, if ye never knew conviction for sin, ye never knew conversion; and unless ye be convinced of sin, and awakened, ye will never believe, and so shall never be saved: And to laugh at conviction is a sure sign of one that never had faith. But, on the other hand, let none rest upon convictions, either as conversion, or as a sign of faith: for there are abundance of convictions in hell, where there is not one grain weight of faith, nor to eternity shall be. Every bosom there is full of convictions, and yet all are unbelievers; and as many of them as lived under the gospel, are damned for unbelief.

5. Some have knowledge of the things of God, and therefore conclude that they do believe: they understand the letter of the gospel, and have been instructed by reading, converse, and the painfulness of masters and ministers; therefore they bless themselves in their own hearts, when the judgments of God are denounced against unbelievers; and when they are bid believe, they put the exhortation by them, thinking that they believe already, and that all is well with them. This is a dangerous mistake, and ruins many poor souls. We do indeed grant, that there is no faith without knowledge and therefore have already laid aside the ignorant as unbelievers; but we are far from allowing that knowledge is a sure sign of faith. For (1.) A great deal more of the knowledge of the gospel than even many true believers have, may be attained without any special aid or assistance of the Spirit of God; but faith is not to be obtained without the special operation of the Spirit. Hence it is called, "the faith of the operation of God, and the work of faith, that is wrought by the exceeding greatness of God's power," Col. ii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 11; Eph. i. 19. (2.) One may have much knowledge, and yet live in open profaneness, and the continued practice of known sins, which is utterly inconsistent with the least spark of saving grace. (3.) An unbeliever may have such a measure of the knowledge of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as to be able to instruct others in the knowledge of him: Judas had this, and yet wanted faith. Nay, (4.) One may not only be capable of teaching others, but may even excel others, and be eminent for such gifts as are of use for the edification of the church, and yet be void of saving faith; no doubt Judas was beyond many others: being a disciple of the highest form, he had gifts in a suitable measure, but no grace. But what need I say more upon this head? the devil, no doubt, has more knowledge of, and insight into the mystery of the gospel, as to the letter, than perhaps any man on earth; and yet has a heart full of malice, spite, and irreconcilable enmity to it. Men, after the same manner, may have their head full of notions of truth, and be perfectly void of saving grace; like the toad, which has a precious stone in its head, and yet has its body full of poison.

6. Every sort of concern about salvation is not a sufficient evidence of faith. Some have some concern, and are some way thoughtful about salvation, and about freedom from wrath, and yet are strangers to, and never come the length of the precious faith of God's elect. O what a length went the young man in the gospel, in his concern about salvation! we may see the history, Matth. xix. 6, &c. and Mark x. 17. Now, I shall take notice of several evidences of some concern about salvation in

his conduct, to let you see that all concern about salvation will not prove you real believers. (1.) He was sensible that it was not any enjoyment of a present life that could make him happy. Though he was a young man, as Mark tells us, a young man that had the advantage of a fair estate, and a ruler, as Luke tells us; yet he had something more in view than a present temporal life: it was eternal life he would have. (2.) Such was his sense of the worth of eternal life, and of his need of it, notwithstanding his youth, health, honour, and wealth, that he had strong desires after eternal life. This the whole series of the history makes evident. (3.) His desires were not mere sluggish wishes: they put him upon a concern about the means whereby the life was to be obtained. This was the question he came to our Lord about: "Good Master," says he, "what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (4.) As far as he knew he had practised. The poor man knew no more but the commands, and that they ought to be kept; and those he had kept, and that universally, without any exception of any of them, and that with diligence and continuance: "All these have I kept, and that from my youth." There is universality, diligence and continuance. (5.) He had a sense of his own ignorance; he was jealous of the shortness of his knowledge, and that he yet lacked something. (6.) This sense did lead him to seek after, and desire instruction; and he came to the right hand, Christ. (7.) When he came, every thing in his carriage discovered his great concern: *First*, He comes running; he was afraid of being in a mistake, he was desirous to be informed; and these two together made him run. *Secondly*, He took all feasible methods to obtain his desire at Christ's hand; he gave him an epithet importing much respect to him, as able and willing. "Good Master," says he. (Master) points at his ability, and (good) at his willingness: and moreover, Mark tells us, that he kneeled to him. (8.) Such was his concern for salvation, that he resolved to scruple nothing that was enjoined him, He knew of no reserve in his own heart. The word says plainly, to any one that considers the import of them, that the man had a resolution to do any thing that was enjoined him. He knew not that there was any thing he would not do. "What shall I do?" says he. He was resolved to decline nothing that he could be desired to do, in order to obtain eternal life. Now, thus far did he go in concern for salvation, and yet he fell short of it; as far as his concern brought him, it led him not to faith; he fell short of that. Now, ye who think that ye believe, because ye have some concern about your souls and eternal life, do ye come this man's length? I fear few of you can say ye do: and yet ye must and will advance farther, if ye have faith, and be saved; for this man and Christ parted, and we never hear of their meeting again.

7. Some joy in hearing the word, some affection to and delight in the gospel-report concerning Christ, are not sufficient marks of faith. Many people, especially of the younger sort, are ready to mistake this for faith, or a sure sign of faith; therefore, to undeceive them, we shall show, 1. Whence it is that people take it for faith, or an evidence of it at least. 2. Whence this may arise that may occasion these flashes of tenderness, where there is no faith. 3. That it is indeed no sign of faith.

As to the first, It is no great wonder it should be mistaken for faith, or an evidence of it, if we consider, (1.) The state of the person in whom

faith is wrought, and the state of the soul in which such flashes of affection and tenderness are ordinarily wrought. When the Lord works faith, he works conviction to clear the way; so, usually these flashes follow some convictions and awakenings. (2.) As faith is wrought, and comes by hearing of the word, by the Spirit of God's concurring with his power; so these flashes are occasioned by the word, and by the operation of the Spirit, though but a common operation, giving some superficial taste and relish of the sweetness of heavenly things. (3.) As faith, when wrought in the soul, glues it, as it were, to the ordinances: so the usual effect of these tastes is, a great and strong desire after the ordinances, which makes them multiply duties, and delight in approaching to God. (4.) As faith makes the soul seek beyond the bare performance of duties, for communion with Christ in the ordinances; so persons who have such flashes, may find an unsatisfiedness with the ordinances, when they find not that same relish as formerly. Any one that considers duly these things, will think it no wonder to find that there are mistakes in this matter.

2dly, We shall a little inquire into the rise of these flashes of concern, delight and tenderness, which look so like to that joy which believers find upon their believing. And if we observe, we shall find some one or other of the following particulars, or at least a concurrence of more of them, to have an influence upon those persons, to the production of these effects. (1.) Novelty. The things of the gospel are new many times to people; and new things, especially when of such a nature that they threaten us no hurt, but, on the contrary, eminently promote our advantage, will very readily work upon our affections, and give some delight, which longer custom and acquaintance doth abate. (2.) There may be something in a person's circumstances, which falling in with the proposal of the sweet offers of the gospel, may readily occasion those flashes of tenderness we are now discoursing of: as for instance, a person under distress of mind will desire freedom from it; and if, upon such an occasion, the mind be entertained with the joys of heaven, the love, mercy, and grace of God in Christ to sinners; if the mind hereby find a diversion from its trouble, this may occasion great delight. The like instance we may have, when persons fall out with the world upon some signal disappointment. (3.) This may be considerably augmented by the strength of the passions in youth. (4.) A variety of gifts in preachers may occasion this. (5.) Something taking and peculiar in some men's way of preaching occasions this. Some have fluency of language, plenty of matter, warmth of affection; when these meet together, such affections will readily be moved. (6.) A surprise may have a great influence this way. These we may possibly afterwards have occasion to discourse more fully of: now we but name them, and proceed,

3dly, To show that these are no sure signs of faith. And, for clearing this, we say, (1.) We have let you see how such affections may be excited, without any special operation of the Spirit of God; which faith can never be. (2.) The scriptures give us an account of such persons who had the flashes we speak of. Our Lord, speaking to the Jews of John Baptist, says, "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing to rejoice in his light for a season," John v. 35. And these hearers of the word, that are resembled to the stony ground, received

the word with joy, and yet proved naught in a day of trial. (3.) Our own observation may furnish us with instances, more than enough, of persons who have had great flashes of joy, which have terminated in nothing, or worse than nothing. But, leaving this, we say,

8. The multiplication of religious duties is no sufficient mark of faith. Some do apprehend, if they be punctual in their attendance upon the duties of religion, that this is proof enough that they do believe. But how far this is from truth, is easy enough to be discerned, by any that duly considers what great proficiency some have made this way, who yet have remained utterly unacquainted with God, and strangers to the faith of God's elect. If ye have no other proof of your faith than this, that ye are punctual in your attendance upon the duties of religion, what do, or have ye, more than they with whom the prophet Isaiah had to do? A people they were who did abound in all these performances, and yet were naught. Look at them in that representation the prophet gives of them, Isa. lviii. 1. We shall find they had more to say upon this score than, I believe, most of you can pretend unto. "They seek me daily," says God, "and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinance of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." One would think, here are surely a set of excellent persons, believers no doubt: but, notwithstanding all this, God rejects all their duties, and themselves also, with the greatest detestation and abhorrence, as we find the prophet telling them, both in this and in the first chapter of his prophecies. We may here observe, that they went a great way in the performance of duty; for, (1.) We find that they seek God. They do not live, as many others did, in a careless neglect of him, whereby there is an incontestable evidence given of an utter and entire want of faith. (2.) They seek him in the ordinances of his own appointment; as this prophet hints here, and gives a more full account in the first chapter of his prophecy. They did not invent to themselves new and uncouth ways of serving and seeking God, such as their own extravagant fancies might suggest to them; but they adhered to the ordinances of their God, his appointments. (3.) Their attendance was not a piece of force and violence put upon them: they took delight in duty, and in approaching to God. (4.) They were frequent and close in their applications to duty; they sought God daily. (5.) They are desirous of further information as to their duty; they did ask of God the ordinance of justice. (6.) They did not only go on in the performance of the ordinary duties of religion, but they did likewise multiply the more extraordinary; such as the fasting spoken of in the ensuing verses. Thus far did they go; but notwithstanding all this, they were void of faith. Thus far may ye go, and yet be utter strangers to the faith of God's elect. Indeed, such as are habitual neglecters of duties, cannot reasonably pretend to any interest or concern in this faith of God's elect: yet neither can such as multiply them say, on this account, that they have faith; since it is plain, in the instance just now mentioned, that this may be to a high degree, while faith is wanting. And no doubt Paul, before his conversion, was short of none in performances of this sort. Nay, further we add,

9. Every change upon the man, even to the better, is no sure proof of

faith. For great alterations, as to people's sentiments, or to their inclination and conversation, may be wrought, where there is no gracious change upon the heart, but it continues as before. Some, when they find themselves altered to the better, from what once they were, do presently begin to think, that now they have faith, and that all shall be well with them. But there is a vast mistake here, a most dangerous, ruining, and soul-destroying error. Indeed, we must own, that where there is no change, there can be no faith; for faith is the gift of God, the work of the Spirit of Christ, and is not born with men, but wrought in them; and when it comes, it comes not alone; it is one of the most essential parts of the new man, or new creature. That here we may undeceive any of you who lay weight upon that which may fail you, if trusted to, we shall insist a little in showing you what changes there may be on a man, who yet continues a stranger to the precious faith of God's elect. How these changes are to be distinguished from the other, which persons really regenerate do undergo, we may afterwards have occasion to discourse, when we come to give the marks of faith that will abide the trial. We say, then, that some change wrought upon you to the better, is not proof enough that ye have faith; since there may be a great change wrought upon persons who never did believe, and that upon the whole man. For,

(1.) There may be a great change wrought upon the mind or understanding of a man. Man is naturally blind, and knows not his way. Sin has put out the eye of the soul; and hence men are said to be in darkness, or to be darkness itself in the abstract, before the Lord begin to deal with them; and when the Lord begins to work upon them, then he enlightens their minds, translating them from darkness to his light. But one who never was savingly illuminated, nor, it may be, ever shall, may yet undergo a great change in his understanding. I tell you a threefold change upon the mind that one may undergo who never was savingly enlightened. [1.] Such a one may, by mere diligence and application, without any supernatural assistance, attain a great deal of knowledge of the truths of God, and of the things of religion, that he had not before. There are few, if any of you, so very dull, but could attain to a great measure of knowledge, would ye apply yourselves to reading, study, and meditation; ye might get your minds fraught with much head-knowledge of religion; and some by this means do attain a great measure of knowledge, which makes a great change upon their minds; the mind that formerly was full of the blackness of darkness and gross ignorance, is now furnished with a stock of knowledge. But all this may be without any faith, or without any supernatural work of God upon the soul: yea, it may be in one utterly void of any regard to God. [2.] There may further be a change to something yet higher; the mind may have a beam or ray of supernatural light dart into it, whereby it may not only understand these truths, as it doth other truths, but may further come to see some peculiar beauty and usefulness in them. That one that is void of the saving faith of God's elect may reach this illumination, the apostle asserts plainly, while he makes it one of the attainments of them who may fall irrecoverably away, Heb. vi. 4. Nay, [3.] This light may be increased to such a degree, as to put them in a capacity to unfold the truths of the gospel to others. Thus there may be a great

change wrought upon the mind or understanding, a change from gross ignorance to some acquired knowledge; from this acquired knowledge to some degree of spiritual illumination, and from that to a high degree of spiritual light, such as Judas and Balaam had, whereby they were capacitated to know and understand the things of God, in a degree so eminent, as to be able to instruct others. All this change may one that is an unbeliever undergo, and yet continue so still, and perish eternally in unbelief.

(2.) There may be a great change upon the conscience, and yet the soul may be void of faith. There may be a change from deep security to awakenings and convictions, and from such troubles again to a sort of peace, calmness, and serenity of conscience. Thus many times it is with temporary believers. If the thunderings of the law make sinners begin to shake and bestir themselves, then the joys of heaven, presented to the soul's view in the light of a beam of supernatural common illumination, will immediately calm, compose, and settle all again.

(3.) There may be a great change wrought on the affections, where there is no faith. One may have flashes of joy and grief about spiritual objects. Nay more, there may be something like an abiding change wrought on the affections; the delight in spiritual duties, the sorrow for sin, fear of wrath, that is attained, may be kept up in the soul for a long time. But of this we have spoken sufficiently already; wherefore we proceed to,

(4.) A change that may be, where there is no faith, and that is upon the will. See what a will the Israelites had, Dent. v. 27. The will may be wrought so far upon, as to arrive at many faint inclinations, wishings, and wouldings after grace. The man that is awakened in some measure, hears so much of the excellency of grace, and of the beauty of holiness, which he is convinced in his judgment is true, that it may induce and draw the will to some wishes, and even to some resolutions of seeking after it. In fine, there may be,

(5.) Great changes upon the conversation where there is no faith. The openly profane man may be changed into a civil, moral, and blameless man; the civil man, by some common work of God's Spirit, may be turned into a professor, who may multiply religious duties, and pretend as high as any. Where persons live under a faithful ministry, and under the influence of lively ordinances, they may find it almost impossible, through the power of conviction, to continue in open profaneness, or, it may be, to rest upon mere civility. These minds may be so filled with light, that conscience will not suffer them to rest short at least of a form of godliness; and therefore many upon such occasions go this length, and step no further. As some do escape the pollutions of the world through lust, who are yet again entangled therein, and overcome, 2 Pet. ii. 2; so some, who have been entangled for a considerable time, are afterward pulled, as it were, out of the snare again, and reach a blameless walk before the world: and, it may be, make a fair profession of religion, and yet are unacquainted with faith. Paul, before his conversion, was blameless concerning the righteousness that is of the law: and why may not one, who has for a while been profane, reform, and go as great a length that way as Paul did? There is no doubt he may.

10. In the *last* place, we say, that ye may have some sort of faith,

and yet want the saving faith of God's elect. Every one that believes has not that faith which we have been discoursing of. There are three sorts of faith which ye may have, and yet be eternally ruined, getting your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

(1.) There is a sort of faith that we may call a cradle-faith. It is of an age, if I may so speak, with the person who has it. Some of you, though ye say ye believe, ye cannot tell how ye came to believe; only as long as ye can mind any thing, ye remember ye did still so; from the time ye could distinguish betwixt good and evil, ye did always believe; ye brought it from the cradle with you. This is the common faith that most part have, and they go no further. And if we could but once get men and women persuaded that this faith will not save them, we would, we think, have gained much upon them. Believe it, my friends, this faith never saved one, and to eternity will never save any; but many a one it has ruined. I have a fourfold exception to lay against this faith. [1.] It is a plant not of God's planting. The faith of God's elect is a plant that is planted by the hand of God; hence it is called "the faith of the operation of God," and "the gift of God;" but this faith, which is so rife among you, is a weed that grows up of its own accord, without any sort of pains. They who have it, are not debtors to God for it, since it sprung up with them, and God had no hand in its production. [2.] It is in a bad soil that it grows, in a corrupt unrenewed nature. Ye who say, ye do believe, dare ye say, as in the sight of God, that ever your hearts were changed and renewed? I am sure many of you dare not say it; or, if ye do, conscience will tell you to your face, that you lie; yet, notwithstanding this, you will maintain that ye believe, and so think yourselves sure of salvation. I beseech you, by all the love you bear to your own souls, do not hazard them upon this faith; for, as sure as God lives, it will deceive you. There never grew a tree in nature's garden, in a soil so bad as that of an unrenewed nature, that ever was capable of bearing so choice a fruit as salvation is. All that grows there is sin, and the fruit of that is death. "The wages of sin is death," Rom. iii. 23.; and if ye expect any other, ye will meet with a disappointment that will not be easy to be borne. [3.] This faith of yours is not kept alive by influence from heaven, as is the faith of God's elect. As the precious faith of God's elect is at first planted in the soul by the blessed hand of him who is the Author of faith to all them that believe; so it receives all its increases from him. He nourishes it by influences from above; it derives all its growth from him. The gentle breezes of the Spirit, the north and south winds, breathing in the ordinances, quicken all the graces of the Spirit, and cause them to send forth a savoury and fragrant smell. Faith holds its life, its all of Christ. But this faith of yours quite overlooks the Mediator; it sees no need of him; it leads not to him. That which it lays hold upon, is some wrong notion of God, as if he were altogether such a one as yourselves, a God that has as little thoughts of sin as ye have, and can with as much ease pass it by without any resentment, as ye can commit it. God doth indeed take pleasure in them that hope in his mercy; but it is in his mercy as discovered in the gospel-method of salvation, and any faith that hath no respect to his will be rejected of God. The faith of God's elect fetches every thing from Christ, as the way and the treasure; and it comes all to him at the end. This faith of

yours, when ye have need of pardon, carries you straightway to God's mercy, without ever owning Christ; but the faith of God's elect leads the believer to Christ, as to him whom mercy has exalted, to be the Prince and the Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Thus faith, saving faith, comes to Christ for all, while that common faith that ye rest upon quite neglects him. [4.] As is the tree so is the fruit. This faith of yours, as it is not of God's planting, but a weed sprung out of corrupt nature's soil, and is kept alive by ignorance of God's holiness and justice, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; so its fruit is answerable to the root. We see not the fruits of holiness grow upon it; but, on the contrary, formality, a neglect of God, indifference about salvation, and all the concerns of religion. And whether ye will believe it or not, when these fruits continue a while, they will ripen into damnation. This faith will not save you, and therefore trust not to it.

(2.) Ye may have a faith, which I may call a rational faith, for destruction's sake. This is a step beyond the former. That common faith is merely the fruit of custom and education: but this goes a degree farther. Some men of refined spirits are not accustomed to take truth upon trust from others, but to search into it themselves, that they may give their assent to it upon solid and rational grounds. And such persons are apt to think it irrational to a high degree, to use less caution in inquiring into the grounds whereon they do believe that religion they are to hazard their souls upon: and certainly thus far they are in the right. Well, then, that they may be satisfied in this matter, they inquire what reason they have to believe that these persons did indeed write the scripture, who are given out to be the penmen of it: and whether, if they be found to be the penmen of it, they be persons worthy to be credited. Upon search they find both to be confirmed, by the greatest historical evidence possible: and thus they are brought to give a general assent, and take up a firm persuasion of the truth of the scripture in general, and particularly of the truths concerning Jesus Christ: and here they rest, and take this for saving faith. And this sort of faith is common enough among the more learned sort, as the other is among the more ignorant. Many a learned man has gone to hell with this faith, which is sufficient indeed to put an accent upon their misery, and to vindicate the justice of God in their eternal destruction; but is no way useful to them for salvation. The nature, uses, and defects of this faith, I shall not insist on; because few of you are much concerned in it, it being not ordinarily to be found among any, save those who have more leisure and occasion for reading than most of you have.

(3.) Ye may yet go a step further, and reach that faith, which by practical divines is called a temporary faith; such as was that which the hearers compared to the stony ground had, of whom our Lord speaks in the parable of the sower, Matth. xiii. 20. And this is a step further than that faith which we last mentioned, in two things. *First*, in its rise. The former sort of faith is the fruit merely of the exercise of the rational faculties; but this is produced by an operation of the Spirit of God. The power of the Spirit going along with the dispensation of the word, doth by a common operation produce this effect in the soul. *Secondly*, The former faith has a respect principally, if not only, to the truth of the gospel;

whereas this has likewise a respect to the beauty, sweetness, and goodness of the things themselves: and hence we are told, that they received the word with joy. They saw a beauty, sweetness, and usefulness in the things discovered, as well as truth in the discovery; and both, by a beam of supernatural light, let in upon the soul by a common operation of the Spirit of God. But although this faith goes thus far; yet in two things it falls short of the faith of God's elect. *First*, It has no abiding root; it is only a transient work upon the soul, without the communication of any inward and abiding principle; the heart is not changed; only there is a transient effect wrought upon the rational power of the soul. *Secondly*, It never carries the soul the length of a full closure with the gospel-method of salvation, whatever apprehension of the excellency thereof may be in it; yet there is never such a view got of all the parts of that contrivance, as is sufficient to determine the heart to an approbation of it.

Several other sorts of faith might likewise be named, which persons may have, and yet fall short of that which is saving: but I shall pass them, because there is not so great danger that they may be mistaken, and put in the room of the faith we now inquire after.

Thus far we have gone in a discovery of the sandy foundations whereon many of you do build your hopes of heaven, and we fear that yet many of you will hold on in the old course, holding fast deceit, and building upon the sand. If ye do so, then we assure you, in the name of God, the foundation will fail you; and the higher your expectations are raised, the more confounding will your disappointment be. Since the hazard has been laid before you, God is free, we are free of your blood; and therefore your destruction is entirely of yourselves; and this will be no mean aggravation of your misery.

We shall now proceed to lay before you,

Thirdly, The true marks of the faith of God's elect, whereby we may know and be sure that ye do believe, and that believing ye shall be saved; which was the last thing we proposed in our entry upon this use of the doctrine.

But before we come to the marks themselves, we shall lay before you a few things. And,

1. We take it for granted, that there are marks whereby faith may be known. A very considerable part of the scripture is said to be written on this very design, to assist persons in making a judgment of their own state, whether they do believe or not, 1 John v. 13, "These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may (know) that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

2. That we may make so clear a judgment of our case by these marks, as to reach joy in faith's apprehension of our own interest in Christ and salvation, there is requisite a special influence of the Spirit of God. God keeps comfort in his own hand, and he is most sovereign and absolute in the dispensing of it. Yet,

3. We say, there are such marks as may, through an ordinary influence of the Spirit, keep the soul up in such a comfortable persuasion of its believing of the reality of its faith, as will at least keep from disquieting and sinking discouragements, and engage it to a cheerful attendance

to all commanded duties, as not being despondent of a blessed issue of what concerns it.

4. There are some marks which have a respect to the reality, and others which do respect the degree of faith. We design only to insist upon such as have a respect to the reality of it; and shall not spend time in offering marks whereby we may know where faith is in its highest degree: for when it comes to that, it will evidence itself to the soul by these blessed concomitants of it, "peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Our business now leading the other way, we shall inquire into those evidences of faith which are to be found for ordinary in all them that do really believe, that is, when not under the immediate influence of some temptation. There are, moreover, some marks that are steadable upon all occasions, in a storm, as well as in fair weather: they are of use to the soul in all its greatest straits and perplexities; there are others which are not discernible in storms. We shall only insist upon the former, and shall not spend your time in handling many, because one solid mark may be of more real and solid use than many.

The way being thus far cleared, I shall now proceed to lay before you some of these evidences of faith, these marks whereby ye may safely conclude that ye do believe. And,

1st, We say one may know and be sure that he doth believe, and that even in the midst of all temptations that may befall him, by his heart's choosing, embracing, and approving God's way of saving sinners by the mediation of Jesus Christ, and relying thereon, with a renunciation of all other pretended ways. This mark indeed is not distinct from faith; for it is one of the principal actings of saving faith, yet it is such a one as is discernible by all that will reflect upon themselves, and that even under great storms and violent temptations. Now, that ye may understand this mark distinctly, we shall, 1. Give some short account of the gospel-contrivance for the salvation of sinners. 2. We shall show, wherein it is that this approbation of the gospel method of salvation consists. 3. We shall show, how faith doth approve of it. And lastly, how it doth discover, even under the greatest temptations, that it indeed doth approve of this method, to an utter rejection of all others.

1. As for the gospel-contrivance which faith approves of, ye may take some account of it in the following remarks.

(1.) It leans upon a twofold supposition in reference to man's estate. The one is that which we find our Lord asserting of the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. And it is equally true of all naturally. All men, by nature, "are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Poor straying apostate man has his eyes put out, and knows not how to take one step towards happiness: he is as blind as a stone. Nor has he any thing to screen himself from the wrath of a sin-revenging God: sin has made him naked: he has now no garment to clothe him, to keep the shame of his nakedness from being seen. He is a perfect bankrupt, and cannot go to the charge of one good thought. Ransack his heart, look never so narrowly into it, ye shall not there find so much goodness left by sin, as to furnish out one really good and acceptable thought. Upon all these accounts, he is miserable and wretched with a witness. Again, this contrivance lays down as a foundation this grand supposition, that man can do nothing for the supply of his own wants.

(2.) The gospel is a discovery of a blessed contrivance that God has laid down for the salvation of sinners, for providing them a blessed supply of all these defects. There was from eternity a happy contrivance framed for providing sinful man with a garment, a robe of righteousness, that the shame of his nakedness may not appear; and for preparing eye-salve to him, to cure his natural folly and blindness; and riches to him, that he may have a sufficient stock to live upon in time and for eternity, even riches of grace, and riches of glory, the unsearchable riches of Christ. For,

(3.) This blessed project provides all this supply for poor sinful man, in Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant: "All the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hid in him; for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 16, and ii. 3. And that upon this blessed design, that all his people might come to him as the great repository of wisdom, and thence derive such supplies as they find occasion for. He is able to furnish them with riches of grace here, and riches of glory hereafter; for with him "are durable riches and righteousness," Prov. viii. 18. And hence it is that we find him pressing the Laodicean church to come to him, that she might have "gold tried in the fire, that she might be rich; and white raiment that she might be clothed, that the shame of her nakedness might not appear; and eye-salve, that she might see," Rev. iii. 18.

(4.) There is in this contrivance a way laid down, for putting the persons whom God designs to save, in the actual possession of that blessed provision that is made for them in a Mediator; and such a way as is exactly adapted to the wise and holy ends God proposes to himself in the whole project.

(5.) The great design God aims at, both in making this provision for the supply of the wants of elect sinners, and in putting them in the possession of it, is, on the one hand, to advance glorious grace; and, on the other, to lay man low. This is expressly asserted to be the design of God in carrying on this project and contrivance, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. Christ Jesus "is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that no flesh might glory in his sight, but that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord." Man has wisdom; but there is no access for him to glory in it, since God has provided and treasured it up for him in Christ Jesus; and not only so, but actually put him in possession of it; for he is made of God wisdom to him. Man, by this means, is clothed in a stately robe of righteousness; but he has nothing to glory of, since, I may say, God not only prepares the robe, but puts it on. Christ Jesus being made of God righteousness to man, he is made holy, and so made meet to be a sharer of the inheritance of the saints in light; but what has he to boast of, since it is entirely owing to the Lord Jesus Christ that he is so? This is the great contrivance which faith approves of.

2. As for the nature of this approbation which faith gives of it, whereby it evidences its own truth and reality, we may take it up in four things.

(1.) Some knowledge of it. Approbation ever implies knowledge: there is no approving of that which we know not. And before we do approve this blessed contrivance, we must see it in a supernatural light:

none ever will approve of it, who see it only with a carnal eye ; for to such it is foolish and weak. To save sinners by a crucified Saviour, in such a way as to ascribe all the glory of it to the grace, mercy, and love of God, without allowing man to divide the spoils with God, "is foolishness to the Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews," 1 Cor. i. 23 ; and it ever will be so, unless to those into whose minds and hearts God has "shined, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

(2.) It takes in the heart's satisfaction with God's ends and designs in this blessed device. What these are, ye may understand from what he did just discourse to you. They are easily reducible to these three. *First*, He aims at the salvation of his own elect. *Secondly*, He designs to save them in such a way, as that they shall have no share in the glory of their salvation. *Thirdly*, He designs to have all the glory of it to his own blessed name. Now, when one approves the gospel-contrivance for the salvation of sinners, then his heart is satisfied with all these designs. The first of them would relish well enough even with a carnal heart ; it is natural to every one to desire salvation : but the other two will never go down with any one who is not, by a day of God's power, made willing. Nothing but omnipotent grace can make man content to stoop so low, that the Lord alone may be exalted.

(3.) This approbation takes in the heart's satisfaction with the means God has made choice of for compassing these blessed designs. The mind sees them in God's light ; and the heart rests in them as proper and sufficient, such as became the wisdom of God to appoint and make use of, in order to the attainment of these ends ; and hereon,

(4.) There ensues the heart's cleaving to this contrivance, even to the whole of it, with universal satisfaction, being fully content with it in all its parts, and preferring it to all other ways ; nay, not only so, but counting them loss and dung, so it may have an interest in this way and method of God's contriving. This is that acting of saving faith that gives a sure title to Christ and all his purchase. He that thus approves of this blessed device, in so doing putteth to his seal, that God is true in the record he hath borne ; and this is the record that God hath borne, that he hath provided life, and that "this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 10. When once a sinner is brought this length, then God reaches all his design, gets all that glory that he is seeking : and therefore no more can be required in order to the sinner's obtaining the advantage of that contrivance. It were easy to make it appear, that all the descriptions of saving faith that we find in the scriptures terminate here. I proceed now,

3. To inquire particularly, how faith doth approve of this contrivance ; or, what is in it that it doth approve. And in answer to this, we say faith approves of it,

(1.) As a way full of infinite wisdom. The manifold wisdom of God shines with such a dazzling lustre in the eye of faith, that it fills the soul with admiration at the depth of wisdom that doth appear in this blessed contrivance, which reconciles the seemingly irreconcilable interests of justice and mercy in God, the one whereof seems to rest satisfied with nothing short of the sinner's death, and the other demands his life ; moreover it admires this contrivance, because it reconciles these two

seemingly irreconcilable desires, viz. that of the glory of God, and that of our own salvation. Both these we should ever have, and both these every one that is savingly enlightened will have: but how they could have been together, in the same soul, the wit of men or angels could never have contrived. For the glory of God's faithfulness in his threatenings, of his authority, purity, and wisdom in the law, seem to rest satisfied with nothing short of the sinner's destruction: therefore in desiring the glory of God, he must have at once desired his own damnation; and consequently in desiring his own salvation, he must have desired God's dishonour. But now this blessed contrivance lets us see how these two may be, not only reconciled, but made inseparable one from the other. Further, as faith approves of, and admires the wisdom of God in the contrivance, so

(2.) Faith approves of this as a way full of love and goodness; and consequently as that which highly suits the nature of God, who represents himself as love, "God is love," 1 John iv. 8. And the soul sees and perceives a blessed suitableness betwixt God's nature and his actings. Hereby it perceives the love of God in that he laid down his life for his people. This is that which the apostle takes notice of, Tit. iii. 5—7. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." Thus faith sees this way, as that which is full of kindness, grace, mercy and love; and it is highly pleased with it as such.

(3.) Faith approves it as a way wherein much of the power of God appears, in that it infallibly obtains his end: "Christ crucified to the Jews is a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that believe, he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God." They see more power, strength, and efficacy in it, than any creature can pretend justly unto; and therefore they do, on this account, approve of it, as becoming the omnipotent God.

(4.) Faith approves of this way as that which exceedingly honours God's law in all parts. The obedience that the son of God gave to it in his life, was the highest honour it was capable of; and therein there was a glorious testimony of respect given to the authority of God, his wisdom, goodness, and purity, in the framing the law: nor was the sanction of the law less honoured by Christ's undergoing the penalty in his death, than the precept was by the obedience of his life.

(5.) Faith looks upon this way as a way that is full of peace, and approves it as such, all challenges being answered by it. The law has nothing to demand. If it require perfect obedience, then Christ hath fulfilled all righteousness, and so is become "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes:" if it demand the bearing of the penalty, then Christ has done that also; he became obedient even unto death: so that he answered the law in both its demands, God, by raising him from the dead, declared himself satisfied, both as to the one and as to the other. And God justifying, conscience has no more right to open its mouth against the sinner. Thus is the peace and comfort of the sin-

ner excellently provided for by this contrivance : and faith approves of it with respect to this.

(6.) Faith approves it as a way full of security for poor sinners. The soul doth by faith see provision laid in against all these things whence it has any reason to fear hurt ; and all this put in the hand of one who is wise to dispense it seasonably, and has engaged to do no less. It sees a fountain standing ever open, for preventing any hazard from the guilt of sin ; it sees armour laid in for preventing any danger from the power of sin ; and withal strength provided, for the management of that armour. In one word, it sees here what is sufficient to satisfy all its desires. These may be all reduced to two, God's glory, and its own salvation. Here it seems so well provided for, that they are now not only consistent, but linked together, after such a sort, that not only the salvation of sinners is consistent with the glory of God, but moreover, the greater the sinner be, the greater glory has God in his salvation ; and upon this account the heart doth approve this blessed device, as that which in particular is suited to its own salvation, counting it a " faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom itself is chief." Hereon the soul cleaves to this way with satisfaction and delight, as the only way wherein its own salvation and God's glory are both provided for. I proceed now,

4. To inquire how faith doth discover its satisfaction with, and approbation of, this way of salvation. And this it doth,

(1.) By the soul's betaking itself, in all its straits, fears, and storms, to this as its anchor. If guilt be charged upon the soul, it has no other relief but this : if the temptation represent God's glory and the soul's salvation inconsistent, the soul flees to this, as to its only refuge : if death and judgment, and its appearance before God, present themselves to the soul's eye ; it fixes only on this, as that which alone can give it relief in all its perplexities.

(2.) In that the soul doth ever confidently reject all other ways that may be tendered. Other ways there are which will offer themselves to the soul in its straits for its relief ; such as, diversions to take off the mind, duties to satisfy the conscience, promises of amendment for the future : faith rejects all these as insufficient : it will not look to them for relief.

(3.) When at any time, through the power of temptation, any thing has been attributed to self, to a derogation from the glory of grace in this contrivance, faith will discover its satisfaction with this way, by the soul's displeasure with itself, for discrediting this blessed contrivance.

(4.) The soul discovers its approbation of this way by that high satisfaction and delight which it takes in its own conformity to it. When faith gets the soul moulded into the very frame of this contrivance, resting in this way, taking shame to itself, attributing all to God, then it fills the soul with refreshing sweetness and satisfaction. The conformity the soul sees in itself to this way, makes it lovely to itself.

(5.) It discovers its approbation of this way, in that it will refuse to abandon it. Sometimes through the power of temptation, it may be made to fear exceedingly, that it get not hold taken of this blessed device ; but it will not be beat from this, that it is a way sufficient and able particularly to save it, could it but bring itself to venture on it. Therefore it will lay the weight of its salvation upon this way, and none other ;

and the doubts that are in such a soul, are not about the sufficiency of the way, but about its own being in it.

2dly, But passing this mark, I shall now offer a second. Wherever saving faith is, it will discover itself, by leading the believer to an approbation of the whole law of God, not only as holy, just, and spiritual, but as good.

A stranger to the faith of God's elect may approve of some of the commands of God. A temperate man may applaud highly the law that forbids drunkenness; the churl may approve the law that forbids prodigality. In a word, every one may approve such precepts as strike not against his own peculiar sin or sins; but the believer approves the whole revelation of God's will concerning man's holiness and obedience.

An unbeliever may be induced to own the law to be spiritual, just, and holy; but never can he, nor will he, be induced practically to own it as good: here it sticks. It is only faith that can say, that his commandments are not grievous; for "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The light of nature may oblige men to judge such and such things lawful or unlawful, just or unjust; but the unrenewed will can never be induced to bend towards the law of God as that which is good. Whatever it may be said to do as to some of God's commands, yet it never can have an equal respect to them all; for an unrenewed will is not subject, nor can be subject to the law of God. It is faith that receives Christ as a King, and so subjects the soul to all his laws. It receives him as the King of Salem, the King of peace, one that has framed all his laws so, that they all concur to promote that great end of government, the peace of his subjects. And this engages the soul to love the law of the Lord, and to delight in it. "O how love I thy law," says the Psalmist, "it is my meditation all the day," Psal. exix. 97. The righteous man's delight is in the law of the Lord, Psal. i. 2. And it is only the righteous man who can delight in the law of the Lord; for, if we speak strictly, the ungodly, the unbeliever, can delight in or approve of none of God's laws. Sometimes indeed, as has been said, the unrenewed man may reflect with delight on some of God's precepts; but he has no regard to them as such. It is rather the things enjoined, than the precept enjoining, that pleases him. It is not the congruity of the thing to the divine will, but to his own inclination, that gains his approbation.

Now, what say ye to this evidence? Can ye say, that ye do approve of, and consent cheerfully to, the whole revelation of God's will concerning that holiness and obedience which he requires of us in the scripture? Such as do indeed approve thus of the law of God, may it is like be perplexed about it, while others, who are alienate from the life of God, will boldly pretend unto it. To these bold pretenders I shall only say, if they wilfully deceive themselves, they will one day smart for their folly: and if they do hold fast this mistake, it will issue in another, and that an irrecoverable one; it will make them stumble into hell, instead of going to heaven. As for such who know not well whether they do thus approve of the law of God or not, I shall endeavour their relief, by mentioning some of the ordinary ways whereby the soul is wont to express or discover its approbation of the whole of that obedience and holi-

ness which God requires of us, and that even while it is at the lowest ebb of strength and comfort.

1. The believing soul looks at that change of its nature, and its renovation into a conformity to the law of God, with unspeakable satisfaction. None doubt, who know any thing of the gospel, that all believers are renewed and changed, born again of the water and Spirit, renewed after the image of God, being created again in Christ Jesus to good works, Eph. ii. 10. I do moreover suppose, that all who have undergone this change since they came to years, are in some measure conscious of it. I do not say, that every one can see distinctly all the lineaments and draughts of the new creature, every particular law written upon the heart; or that every one can even see so much of this change, know its renovation so far, as to be sure he is a new creature, created in Christ Jesus to good works. But few, if any, of the persons named, will be found, who cannot say, and who do not say, that once they had no liking to holiness, or to the law of God, but had an aversion from conformity to it; but now, if they see no more, yet they see a desire of being universally holy, and that they have no quarrel at it. Thus far they see and know. Now, this change is satisfying, in some measure, to the believing soul: it looks back with delight to it, and thereby discovers its love to the revelation of God's will concerning holiness.

2. The believing soul discovers its liking to the law of God, by cherishing and entertaining the motions that it finds in itself towards this law. In the renovation of our natures, we are made partakers of the divine nature: we have a principle of life, a new heart, implanted in us; and this, though it be not always discernible, yet is ever acting and exerting its power in motions and inclinations toward the law of God, and obedience thereto. Every believer cannot but feel these in himself, if he observe carefully. Now, the believing soul entertains and cherishes these, and takes a peculiar delight in so doing; he has peace and rest while he does it: "Great peace have all they that love thy law." Whereas, on the other hand, he has none when he does otherwise.

3. It conceives a particular satisfaction in such acts of obedience as carry in them any good degree of conformity to the law of God. When a believer attains to liveliness, spirituality, and concern, joined with self-denial, and a dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance in any duty or act of obedience, then he is pleased therewith: and herein he discovers a great love to the law, respecting both the matter and manner of the duty performed.

4. The believer discovers his delight in the law of the Lord, by that sweet complacency and satisfaction which he will find in any measure of this holiness that others have attained to. Faith looks at the holiness required by the law transcribed into the lives of fellow-believers, and is highly pleased therewith; and the more there is of it transcribed into the walk and life of any, the higher value it will teach us to put upon them. It makes us look on such as have any thing of this image of God as excellent and happy. If the believer cannot see himself conformed to this law, yet he is pleased to see others, and looks upon them as the excellent ones of the earth. If he cannot get his own heart so engaged as he would wish; yet he will look upon them as happy, in whose hearts

are the ways of God. This is a clear proof of the believer's being pleased with, and of his delighting in the revelation of the will of God concerning man's holiness, when he is delighted with the picture of it, whenever he sees it, in himself or others.

5. The believer discovers his liking to God's law, that enjoins holiness, in that he will not entertain the least dislike of it, when he is under the greatest temptations to do so. When he falls under apprehensions that he shall be ruined for want of a due compliance with the law, he may well be displeased with himself, but he will not be so with the commandment, Rom. vii. 10—12. "The commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death; but the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." However it be with me, whatever becomes of me, though I die and perish, yet the law is good. The soul under the conduct of faith, though it cannot reach a full compliance with the will of God, yet it dislikes nothing in it. Though the law enjoins duties cross to its natural inclinations, attended with great difficulties, and interfering with interests in the world, yea, and such as expose to great hazards; yet it will entertain no dislike at any thing in this good law, nor desire to have any alteration or abatement. Itself it would have changed, and brought to a compliance with the will of God; but never will it desire any alteration in the law. It may desire some alteration sometimes in God's providential disposal of its concerns; but as to the commands which respect our holiness and obedience, it wills, it wishes no change; and this is a sure proof of its high esteem of the law.

6. That soul that is under the conduct of faith, will evidence its satisfaction with the law by its displeasure with itself, upon every occasion wherein there is any new discovery of its own want of conformity to the law in any notable instance. No sooner comes it to understand that it has fallen short of conformity to, or swerved from the law, in any notable instance, but it is filled with self-abhorrence. Holiness it would be clothed with, and likes; and therefore, when it gets a view of itself without it, in any eminent measure, it cannot be reconciled to itself.

7. Faith discovers its approbation of the law, by filling the soul with desires and longings after a conformity to the law. It puts that prayer of the Psalmist in the soul's mouth, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," Psal. cxix. 5. That psalm is full of such desires, which are so many illustrious proofs of the Psalmist's faith.

8. To conclude, the soul under the conduct of faith shows its approbation of, and satisfaction with, the whole revelation of the will of God concerning that holiness he requires of man, by refusing to be satisfied with any condition, wherein it falls short of a full conformity to it. Tell such a soul, that God is reconciled to it; nay, though God himself intimate to the believer's soul, that he is reconciled to him, that he has forgiven his sins, that he means to take him to heaven, that it shall pass the power of devils or men to disappoint him of heaven; yet all this will not make him satisfied, till he obtain a full conformity to the law of God. The believer says, with Haman in another case, Esth. v. 13, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai:" so long as I see any sin, nothing can satisfy fully: "But when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness," Psal. xvii. 15. Never will I be satisfied till I be like thee, says the believing soul. Now, if ye can say, that ye do thus approve the

whole revelation of the will of God concerning duty, then ye do believe ; if not, ye do not believe. We now proceed to a

Third mark, whereby ye may know whether ye do believe or not ; and that is taken from the express testimony of the apostle Peter, "To you, therefore, who believe, he is precious," 1 Pet. ii. 7. Wherever there is faith, it raises Christ high, and places him on the throne, both in the mind and in the affections. Now, how is it with you? Is Christ precious to you? (1.) Have ye many thoughts about him? serious and sober thoughts I mean. Few of you, I fear, have so ; and a sure proof this is, that ye have no high esteem of, and sincere love for him. (2.) Are ye at much pains to commend him to the esteem and affection of others, especially of those whom ye love most? What say ye to this, parents, children, husbands, wives? take ye care to commend Christ to one another? (3.) Do ye prize opportunities of seeing Christ, of getting into his acquaintance? Do ye prize the means of his own appointment, for getting discoveries of him? (4.) Can ordinances satisfy you without him? Can ye this day go home from this house, as great strangers to Christ as ye came, and yet go well satisfied with your day's work? Then I dare say ye do not believe. (5.) Do ye resolutely part with every thing that comes in competition with Christ? When you must lose the world or Christ, or disoblige the world or Christ, which of the two do ye make choice of? (6.) Can other things satisfy without Christ? If so, then truly he is not, and cannot be said to be precious to you.

Other marks of faith I shall now pass ; and shall reduce those three that I have given you, to three questions, which I crave leave to pose your consciences seriously upon. 1. Are you pleased with, do you rest satisfied with Christ Jesus himself? See ye any loveliness in his person? or is he to you one void of form or comeliness? 2. Do you renounce your own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and venture your all upon his wisdom, righteousness and strength? 3. Are you pleased with his yoke? do you really think his burden light, and his yoke easy? If ye dare assert, then, that ye have seen, and are pleased with the person of Christ, that ye are satisfied with his provision for your salvation, and with his yoke ; then I dare, in Christ's name, assert you believers.

I shall conclude this use, by speaking a little to several sorts of persons among you. We have now been laying before you some marks or characters whereby ye may know yourselves. Let me therefore seriously, as in God's sight, inquire of you, Have ye applied those characters to yourselves, that ye might know what your state is, whether ye do believe or not? Some, I hope, have made conscience of doing so, out of a real desire to be at a point in this great matter : others, I fear, have not been at pains to be satisfied in this matter, either out of carelessness, or out of fear that possibly the result of the trial might not be satisfying ; or out of a vain presumption that it was needless.

To the latter sort, I say, (1.) Is it not worth your while to know whether ye do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ or not? Care ye not whether ye be saved or damned, whether heaven or hell be your portion? (2.) Have ye no regard to the command of God, that bids you "try your ownelves, and prove yourselves," that bids you "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure?" (3.) Though ye be afraid to

know the worst, and endeavour never so industriously to hoodwink yourselves, ye will be made at last to know what ye are. (4.) Supposing the worst, whether will the knowledge of the worst now or hereafter, when there will be no remedy, be most unpleasant and terrible? (5.) Are ye so sure, that ye need not a trial? Have not others thought themselves believers, and yet have found themselves in a mistake? (6.) Your carelessness and neglect of trying, is a sufficient trial; it plainly shows, that you are not sincere, that you are unbelievers; and therefore we shall list you amongst them. Believers not only try themselves, but do, moreover, apply to God that he may try them, Psal. cxxxix. 23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts."

As for those who have been at pains to apply these things to themselves, I shall put this question to them: Do ye believe on the Lord Jesus, or do you not? Ye may be cast all into three sorts and ranks.

1. Some of you are found unbelievers with a witness; and your sin is written in legible characters, even as it were with a sun-beam.

2. Some have endeavoured to know, but scarce can determine, whether they do believe or not.

3. A third sort there is, who can say they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall speak shortly to each of these sorts of persons, and then conclude this subject.

First, I shall address myself to unbelievers, who make, I fear, the most considerable part in this auditory. To this sort belong all the openly profane, swearers, drunkards, liars, unclean, fornicators, and adulterers, profaners of the Lord's day; and, moreover, all grossly ignorant sinners, all self-righteous sinners, all habitual neglecters of duties, secret, private, or public; in one word, all who do not approve of God's contrivance for the salvation of sinners, who approve not of the law of God, to whom Christ is not precious. I shall speak to you as shortly as may be, of your sin, your danger, and your duty.

1. I begin with your sin. I shall not insist in discoursing of the nature of unbelief in the general; I shall only name some of the ingredients in your sin. If one be accused of murder, adultery, incest, or the like, his name is presently odious, and every one looks on him as a monster, and that justly. Yet your sin goes a step beyond any or all of these; It has no parallel. While ye view it in bulk, it appears little: I shall therefore give you a view of it in its parts, and expostulate with you in reference to your guilt.

(1.) Is it a small thing to you, O unbelievers! to trample upon the authority of God, to contemn it in the most signal instance? God has put a special stamp of his authority on the command, to believe on the Lord Jesus, 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" and will nothing less serve than to attack that command which God has declared his most special regard unto?

(2.) Is it a small thing with you, unbelievers, to charge a lie upon the God of truth? And this is your sin, 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Nay, you seal this monstrous untruth, that the

God of truth is a liar ; for as he that believeth putteth his seal to the faithfulness of God, so the unbeliever calls God a liar, and sets his seal to it.

(3.) Ye impute folly to the only wise God, and that in the most signal instance of his wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom are laid out in this contrivance. Here is manifold wisdom, wisdom in a mystery, the admiration of angels, the wonder of the world for wisdom. Is it then so light a matter for you to charge God, as ye do with folly ? Unbelief calls it foolishness in the abstract ; while faith calls this contrivance wisdom, and even a master-piece of wisdom.

(4.) Ye charge God with a defect of goodness, and reject, yea, trample upon his love, grace, mercy, and kindness. This is the glass wherein alone all these things are to be seen ; herein appears the love, the kindness, the mercy of God ; this is his name, whereby he desires to be known, " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious ; " this is his blessed face which he has discovered to us under the gospel. Unbelief breaks the glass wherein God's goodness is to be seen, blurs this title and name which God values himself upon, spits in the very face of God, and contemns that discovery he has made of himself. In a word it makes an attempt upon the very life of God, in this matter. It endeavours to rifle his cabinet, and carry away the most precious crown-jewel in heaven, that glory which he will not give to any other, that is dear to him as his life. The believer, like Abraham, Rom. iv. gives glory to God ; and the unbeliever takes it away as much as possibly he can.

(5.) Ye who are unbelievers call Christ accursed, whom God has blessed, in whom all the elect ones are blessed, whom all the angels and saints above do bless and eternally praise. Was it not enough, that our Lord, while on earth, did suffer of this sort from his unnatural countrymen, that ye must add to their wickedness ? It may be, ye may think to refuse the charge ; but this is a vain attempt, it cannot do. Where Christ has once been preached, every one either says, that Jesus is the Lord, or calls him, at best, practically accursed, and rejects him as a horrid impostor. And is this a small sin to treat the Lord of glory so ?

(6.) As if this were not enough, ye imbrue your hands in the blood of God, crucifying to yourselves afresh the Son of God, and practically owning and avouching as yours the cursed impiety of the Jews. Believe it, not upon my word, but upon the testimony of God's word, that they may have a hand in crucifying Christ, who never saw him in the face. Those we find charged with this guilt, by the apostle to the Hebrews Heb. vi. 6. We have no reason to suspect that most of them ever saw Christ in the face.

(7.) But may not all this suffice ? Has not the Son of God suffered enough at your hands, when ye treat him as a cursed deceiver, and with the wicked Jews, cry out by your practice, " Crucify him, this fellow is not worthy to live : " But must there be some further evidence of your spite against the Lamb of God ? Ay, more, every unbeliever tramples under foot the blood of the Son of God. It is not enough that Christ is maligned, and by your practice refused as an impostor ; but ye must crucify him ; and, as if your spite could not terminate with his death, ye trample his blood under foot. Ye have already in practice rejected Christ ; there wants but one step to involve you in the guilt of those of whom

the apostle says, Heb. x. 29. that they "trode under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." All unbelief has something of this in it.

(8.) And that nothing might be wanting to enhance your guilt, all this is done under the pretence of friendship; ye cry, Hail Master, and then crucify him; ye betray the Son of man with a kiss. Ye wear his livery, eat his bread, call him Master; and yet lift up the heel against him: a crime not to be paralleled by any, but that of Judas; the Jews owned themselves his enemies. See Heb. x. 19.

(9.) That the whole Trinity may bear its proportion in your cursed opposition to it, ye do despite unto the Spirit of God. What can be a higher contempt of the Spirit of God, than to refuse his testimony, resist his strivings, and thereby grieve him; and this every one of you has done many a day.

(10.) Ye declare a gospel-ministry useless; ye call not only ministers, but all who have owned Christ, fools; ye justify their persecutors, and mock both God and man in your professed adherence to the name of Christ, and profession of religion. In one word, ye reject Christ, resist his Spirit, and maltreat his ambassadors.

Thus far have we shortly laid before you your sin. With the like brevity, I shall,

2. Represent your danger. Unbelievers, ye sit secure, ye fear no ill. Ye do perhaps promise yourselves peace, and, with the fool in the gospel, have long ago sung a requiem to yourselves, Soul, take thy rest. Well were it for you, could ye always deem so; but think on it, this will not do: I assure you, your hazard is great beyond thought, as secure as ye sit. That I may, if possible, awaken you, I shall shortly tell you what it is ye are in hazard of, and then show wherein your hazard lies. And if, after a just consideration of these two, ye think it not worth your while to provide for your own security, then sleep on.

If ye ask what ye have to fear, I shall give you a short account of it from four scripture-expressions.

(1.) It is damnation ye have to fear; "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." So says the scripture, Mark xvi. 16. Damnation, though jested at by some, is yet a very grave and momentous thing. A sentence passed by the great Judge, before so solemn an assembly as that of angels and men, adjudging poor sinners to hell, by an irrevocable sentence, and unalterable appointment, is sure no light matter.

(2.) It is wrath the unbeliever has to fear, and is in hazard of: "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 18, 36. And "who knows the power of God's wrath?" Who can endure the anger of an incensed God? This expression is designed to point forth the severity of the sentence. It is borrowed from men, who, though they may sometimes calmly, without any anger, punish; yet when they are in wrath, they deal with great severity, and are not influenced with these mitigating considerations, which sometimes bind up their hands. The angry man designs not the good of the person he punishes, as the other does, but his ruin. So when God designs to ruin impenitent sinners, he is said to deal with them in wrath. 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

(3.) It is destruction. This tells the event. They who fear not God, know him not, and obey not the gospel, are doomed to everlasting destruction, 2 Thess. i. 9. Ruin or destruction is the doom of unbelievers. Their hopes for the future, as well as their present enjoyments, are entirely destroyed, and that with an everlasting destruction.

(4.) It is called punishment; and this points out the nature of that which ye are in hazard of. It is a punishment, and that a sore one, proportioned to your crime. The love of God, as great as it is, is contemned by rejecting the gospel-proposal, for the salvation of sinners; even as the love of the Father, which is so highly commended in giving his Son, and the love of the Son that is so highly magnified in giving himself. This punishment will be proportioned to the value of that blood that is trampled upon. If ye be charged with so great a debt as is the price of the blood of God, it will not be soon paid. It is great in proportion to the means enjoyed, whereby ye might have obtained an interest among God's chosen ones, had ye managed suitably. In fine, it is great in proportion to that salvation which is slighted, the greatness whereof we did illustrate at some length formerly. "If the word spoken by angels, was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, and I will repay, saith the Lord."

But wherein lies our hazard, will ye say, of all these evils ye speak of? I answer, Ye are indeed in imminent danger. For,

(1.) The nature of God makes your punishment necessary. Sin, every sin, is the "abominable thing which God hates," Jer. xlv. 4. Much more is unbelief so, which, on the account formerly mentioned, has something in it beyond other sins.

(2.) God has threatened unbelievers with wrath, damnation, destruction, and punishment; and when once he threatens, all his attributes stand engaged for the execution. Has he said, and will he not do?

(3.) He has impartially punished others: and is not this proof enough of the measure ye may expect to meet with? The carcasses of the Israelites fell in the wilderness, for unbelief.

(4.) There is no possible remedy for your sin. Such as reject Christ, reject the only remedy; and if "we sin wilfully, after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26, 27.

(5.) To make all sure, the oath of God is engaged for your punishment, Heb. iii. 18. and to "whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believe not?" Had we time to discourse of these things at length, your danger might be easily manifested.

3. I shall now shut up what I have to say to you, in a short account

of your duty, having already laid before you your sin and imminent danger. The sum of this is that which is contained in the words of our text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Before we come to press this duty upon you, we must acquaint you, that we come not in our own name to treat with you upon this head; but under the character and notion of Christ's ambassador, clothed with a commission from him. We do come to you in his name, and shall treat with you according to the instructions received from our great Lord and Master. According to our instructions, then, we do in his name demand and require several things, all comprehended in that short one, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

(1.) That ye do own and acknowledge yourselves fools, blind and ignorant sinners, utterly void of, and incapable by your own endeavours to attain to, any measure or degree of the saving knowledge of God; and that ye do receive, rest, rely, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for instruction, wisdom, and understanding of all things that are needful to be known, in order to your acceptance with God, and partaking of his salvation: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding," Prov. iii. 5. "Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18.; which he can no otherwise be, than by trusting entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God, to all them that believe, wisdom.

(2.) We do, in our great Lord and Master's name, demand and require, that in your appearance at the bar of God, or of his deputy your own consciences, to answer for your sins, ye do never once look to, or in the least expect to be absolved, acquitted, or justified, on account of any righteousness of your own: but that ye shall here disclaim and refuse your own righteousness entirely, without offering to plead in your own justification, your own doings or sufferings, resting and relying only upon that righteousness which Christ has wrought, pleading only that Christ has suffered all the punishment that the law did threaten you with, and has yielded a full and complete obedience to all its demands in your name; to which righteousness, active and passive, ye trust, as that only whereby ye can be absolved at the bar of God from the charge laid against you, and have a title to that life and happiness which is the promised reward thereof. Ye must, with the apostle, Phil. iii. 9. "count all but loss and dung, that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

(3.) Whereas ye have by your sins rendered yourselves justly obnoxious and liable to the displeasure, anger, and wrath, of the holy and just God, we do require, that ye shall never offer to him your own faith or obedience, your doing or suffering, your prayers or tears, as a satisfaction for the offence done him, or a propitiatory offering to atone him, and turn away his anger; but that ye do trust only to the Lamb of God, whom we set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, in whom alone God is well pleased with, and accepts of sinners.

(4.) We do further demand, in Christ our Master's name, that ye believe on and receive him as your absolute and sovereign Lord: that

ye readily and cheerfully obey all his commandments, that ye willingly submit to his providential disposal of you.

(5.) We do require, that ye believe on and receive him as the Author, Preserver, and Maintainer of spiritual life, and of the whole work of sanctification, to whom alone ye are to trust, for the beginnings, progress, and completion of a work of sanctification, he being made of God sanctification, as well as righteousness, to all them that believe.

(6.) We do further demand, that ye do all in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17. and that ye attempt no duty, go forth against no enemy, but in his name and strength, and under his conduct; trusting to him only for strength, protection, throughbearing, and acceptance.

In fine, to sum up all, we do, in our great Lord's name, require a present ready compliance with all and every one of these demands. We have no instructions to allow you one hour's delay: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; and to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." We have no commission to speak of to-morrows. Nor will we, nor can we, nor dare we, part these demands. Comply with all or none. That short one in our text implies them all and more, which we shall now insist upon, having at length opened the nature of this duty in our explication of that doctrine which we are now improving.

This is the substance of what we do in our Lord's name crave; and we are instructed to press those demands, and urge your compliance with them, 1. By entreaties; 2. By commands; 3. By threats.

1. Know then, O unbelievers, though our blessed Lord and Master might peremptorily require obedience to, and acceptance of these demands, and upon the first refusal, turn you all into hell; yet such is his condescension, that he has given us in commission to beseech and entreat your compliance. Therefore, as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God; which can no otherwise be, than upon an acceptance of the terms we have proposed to you. We want not motives to enforce our petition; we are rather straitened with the number of them than with want. We have so many in our view, that we know not where to begin, or how to end.

(1.) We earnestly, in Christ's stead, beseech your falling in with the demands made upon you, which are in themselves worthy of all acceptance. We crave no unreasonable thing, when we bid you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The request is suited to all the principles of reason. What more suitable than for the creature to grant the request, comply with the desire, (pardon the expression) of the Creator? What more suitable to that rational principle of self-preservation, and allowable self-love, than for a captive to accept of a deliverer, a slave to receive a Redeemer, a condemned malefactor to welcome a pardon, a sinner to entertain a Saviour, a wanderer to lay hold upon a guide, a poor man to accept of riches when offered, and a pursued offender to betake himself to the city of refuge? Nothing sure can better quadrate with that principle that is interwoven in the very frame of our natures. Again, what more suited to our interest than this? This is a rational principle, when kept within just bounds; and it has a great influence, for ordinary, upon the actions of men. Interest, real or mistaken, rules the world:

and never did it more appear than here, pleading strongly for your acceptance of, and compliance with our desires. A compliance will take you from the dunghill to the throne, will enrich beggars with all the fulness of God; will make the children, nay, the slaves of Satan, heirs of heaven, and advance them to the estate and dignity of being sons of the Most High. It is not a few things, but all things, that ye may make yours, by accepting of this offer. If ye believe, all things are yours, things present, and things to come, grace and glory: "all are yours, and ye are Christ's." Once more, nothing more suitable to that principle of gratitude, that is judged to be so much suited to the nature of man, that he cannot forego it without sinking himself a degree below the very beasts. Nothing, I say, is more agreeable to gratitude. He who gave you all that ye possess, to whom alone ye must owe all that ye shall to eternity enjoy, asks this small and reasonable boon, this just desire; and we in his stead, beseech, entreat, and obtest your compliance. Shall we get a refusal, when our demand is so highly reasonable? Reason, self-love, interest, gratitude, all second our request. If ye refuse in this, if ye will not hear these seconding and urging our earnest request, then we take God, angels, and men, to witness against you, that rather than comply with the desire of the ambassador of Christ, supplicating you in his name, you will not stand to counteract all the principles of reason, self-preservation, interest, and gratitude, to hear whom ye will not refuse in any other case.

(2.) We beseech you, in Christ's stead, to accept of him; for, we dare say, he is worthy of your acceptance, worthy for whom ye should do this thing. He is the "only begotten of the Father," and is possessed of all the glorious perfections of the Father; he is the "express image of his person, the image of the invisible God." And as upon account of his personal excellencies, so upon account of the good offices he has done you, he deserves good treatment at your hand. He has honoured your nature, by joining it to his own, in a glorious and mystical personal union. He has given the most pregnant proof of matchless love to lost sinners: he left the Father's bosom, to bring them there; he died that they might live; he suffered that they might be saved. In a word, all the perfections of a divine nature, all the perfection of your own, all the wounds, every drop of the blood of the crucified Saviour of the world, all the tears he shed, all the drops of blood he in his agonies did sweat for the relief of poor sinners; all cry with one voice, Sinners, we beseech you, believe on the Lord Jesus. Can you refuse what is craved by such a one?

(3.) We pray you, by the "mercies of God," in the "bowels of our Lord Jesus," believe on him, accept of him; for his heart is upon this request. Nothing more acceptable to him, than a compliance with this call; he laid the foundation of this offer we make to you, in his own blood; he wept at sinners' folly, that would not comply with it; he has instituted a gospel ministry for this very end, and has been, if I may so speak, at a vast expense of gifts and grace for the maintenance of this his own ordinance. He has given them most peremptory orders, to call you, to beseech you, to command, to threaten, nay, to compel you to a compliance. Will ye refuse our Master that request he has so much at heart.

(4.) We beseech you, accept of him now, grant our request, as ye

would have yours granted by him, at that day when ye shall be obliged to supplicate him, standing before his bar, as pannels before the Judge of all the earth. None shall have their request granted in that day, who will not grant ours now. Will ye not then hear our Master now? If ye refuse him now, how will ye think to obtain any favour from him then?

(5.) We beseech you, in the name of all the glorious Trinity, to grant our demands. We are ambassadors for Christ, and God doth beseech you by us. God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, do all join in the supplication. Never were there such three names at a supplication, never such three hands at a petition. O sinners! what hearts have ye, if ye can refuse the desire, the supplication, the entreaties of a whole Trinity? All the love of the Father, all the grace of the Son, and all blessings that are enjoyed by communion with the Holy Ghost, all plead with you for your compliance. Can ye refuse us, then, O sinners, O rocks, O hearts harder than rocks?

(6.) Once more, we beseech you, be ye reconciled to God, accept of, and believe on our Lord Jesus Christ; for we assure you in our great Master's name, he is no ordinary supplicant. He never came with such a supplication to the fallen angels: he never came with it to many nations of the world, who would, we make no doubt, welcome it, if they knew it, and had it. Kings are not ordinary petitioners, and therefore it is no wonder they take ill with a repulse.

Now, O sinners! what answer shall we give to him that sent us? what return shall we give to our Master? Shall we say, that we came to the congregation of Ceres, that we showed his commission, told our errand, in his name supplicated for a compliance with his demand? But that ye would not hear him, though we besought you in his name, by all the ties of reason, self-preservation, interest, and gratitude, by the glorious work of Christ, by all the marks of his love to mankind, by all his concern for sinners; that we had a whole Trinity seconding us, and that we met with a refusal? Are ye willing that we take witness upon this refusal, and, in our Master's name, protest that this our reasonable, nay, advantageous request, was refused? It is a wonder that ever the commands of God should be disobeyed; but it is yet a greater, that ever the request, the entreaty of a God should be denied. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, God beseeching! and man refusing!

2. If this will not prevail with you, then know, that we are instructed by our great Lord and Master to make use of his authority, and in his name to command your compliance. We do, therefore, in the name of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, command every one of you, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, to believe on him, and receive him. Beware of despising his authority. If ye be wise, obey his commands. For,

(1.) Never was there a command given by any king, that deserved more respect, upon account of the matter of it. If ye look to it, ye will find it nothing else but this, Christ commands you to be happy, commands you to heaven; and will ye, out of hatred of God's authority, damn your own souls?

(2.) Obey this command; for it is his, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Prince of the kings of the earth," the high and only

Potentate, who, on account of the super-eminent excellency of his nature, his interest in us by creation and preservation, has the unquestionable right to our obedience, without any reservation.

(3.) Dispute not this command; for it is his who did command you out of nothing, and who can, with the like facility, command you into hell, which is infinitely worse than nothing.

(4.) If ye will obey this command, we have an allowance, in his name, to make offer of himself, and of all his glorious purchase; and according to our commission, we do here, in the name of our great Lord and Master, offer him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: we offer him, and all he has, to every one within these doors. Whoever ye be, whatever your sins are, though as great as ever were the sins of any of the sons of Adam, we do here offer Christ to you, and do promise, that if ye will accept of him, he will "in no wise cast you out;" nay, he shall save you, make you sons of God, nay, heirs, yea, and joint heirs with himself. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved." Take him, and have him; take him, and have him with all things; all the blessings that the infinite, eternal, electing love of the Father, designed for his chosen ones; all the blessings that the precious blood of God, one drop whereof was of more value than ten thousand worlds, did purchase; all that the great and precious promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, are able to grasp or comprehend: all that quick-sighted faith, that looks from one eternity to another, from eternal electing love, projecting mercy to eternal salvation, flowing from that fountain, can set its eye upon; all that the enlarged capacity of a perfected soul can hold or desire to all eternity: in one word, all that a God can bestow, or a creature receive; if ye receive Christ, all is and shall be yours.

3. But if we can neither prevail by commands nor entreaties with you, then we give you to understand, that we have it in commission to urge you to a compliance by threatenings.

(1.) If ye believe not, now in the accepted time, in this your day, then the things which belong to your peace will be "hid from your eyes." Our Master will give over treating with you, call home his ambassadors, or give them commission to turn to others; as we find he did when the Jews rejected the gospel-offer, Acts xiii. 46. "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us."

(2.) We do in our great Lord and Master's name, proclaim war against you. Unbelievers, finally rejecting Christ, are to him as Amalek, with whom the Lord has sworn he will have war from generation to generation.

(3.) We are bid tell you, in our Lord's name, O unbelievers! that though you disobey one command, ye shall be made to obey another, nothing so much to your comfort and advantage. If ye obey not that command, "Believe, and be saved;" then ye shall be obliged to obey that, "Go ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, choose you which ye will obey. This day ye have had life and death set before you; either then ye must choose life and live; or

choose death, and die. An answer we do, in our Master's name, demand. If once he call us back, and forbid us to treat any more with you; if he give up dealing with you, then we may say, Woe to you when he departs from you. When he calls home his ambassadors, he will send his armies in their room, who shall destroy those rebels, "who would not that he should reign over them." Ye have life and death before you, choose which of them ye will.

Having thus addressed myself to unbelievers among you, I shall now, *Secondly*, Speak a word shortly to you, who, after search, are in doubt about yourselves, whether you do believe or not. Waving many things I once designed, I shall address you in a few words.

1. I must confess, your case is very sad and deplorable. Nothing more woeful, than to be thus in suspense, without knowing what your case is. You hang betwixt heaven and hell: if ye be concerned about your state, a sad conflict betwixt hope and fear will torment you. You can have no comfort in any enjoyment, if ye continue so. O what a lamentable case are ye in! for ye run a risk for eternity, and lose the comfort of time.

2. Think on it; I assure you, it will be a work of difficulty to get satisfaction about your believing. The words whereby this is set forth in scripture, do all import pains. It is not just to look, and to be at a point; but there is searching, proving, trying. The candle of the Lord must be lighted, and ye must search; the touchstone must be brought, and ye must prove yourselves; the furnace must be kindled, and ye must abide the trial; ye must put yourselves in the balance, which he holds who is a God of judgment, by whom actions are weighed.

3. Rest not in this state: "give all diligence to make sure your calling and election." God's authority, your own comfort, the credit of the gospel, the glory of Christ, bid you all haste out of this state.

And, for your direction, I shall lay before you the few particulars following, which, if ye observe, will do much to rid you out of all your doubts, through the blessing of God, by the interposition of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Conclude not that ye want faith, because ye do not see or find all these things in yourselves which others have found, either before, in the time, or after the Lord's working faith in them, whereby they are united to Christ. Some have a strong law-work, of long continuance, before conversion; some have much distinctness, confidence, and clearness, at the very time of conversion, which enables them to give a distinct account of the time, place, and means of their conversion; and some have much joy and high manifestations afterwards. But though ye come not their length, ye have no reason thence to conclude yourselves unbelievers, since in some the exercise is neither so intense, nor of such continuance, as that of others, only it is such as is sufficient to take them out of themselves to Christ; and this is all the sense of sin that is absolutely necessary. Some cannot, amidst the mist raised by their own corruptions, Satan, and the world, see God working upon their souls; nor can they reach that joy and comfort in believing, which others do; nor are they admitted to see Christ upon the mount, in high manifestations of his glory.

2. Conclude not that ye are unbelievers, because ye see not all things as they should be with you. Sin, in its being, sin raging and tyranniz-

ing, sin in the heart, drawn out to some acts of impiety, and prevailing in various degrees, are no sufficient evidences of the want of grace, or of the want of faith. Yet let none sin because grace abounds.

3. Study the nature of the covenant of grace well. This will be exceedingly helpful to you, and remove many rubs out of your way, and answer many of your doubts; particularly, study to know the ground of your acceptance with God, and of your admission and access into a covenant-relation: it is not your freedom from sin, it is not freedom from gross sins, nor is it any thing wrought in us, or by us, but only the sovereignly free grace of God in Christ, which glories in removing the greatest offences, in bestowing the choicest mercies upon the chief of sinners. Therefore none can be ruined, whatever his sins be, who is willing to owe salvation to free grace in Christ. The greatest sinner may be saved in this way, as well as the least; there is no odds with free grace; it is no more difficult to forgive the worst of sinners, than to forgive the least sinner. Nay, the greater a person's sins be, as they have greater need, so they have the greater encouragement to come, in regard that God has declared, that the design of all his dealings with sinners, is the glory and advancement of his grace in their salvation; and that the greater the sins of such as do apply to grace for salvation are, the more is it glorified. But beware that ye sin not, because grace abounds. There is here great encouragement to such as are great sinners, but none to any to be so. "Shall we sin, because grace abounds? God forbid."

4. Study the condescension of the covenant to the state of believers, who carry about with them still a body of sin and death, while they are here in this house of their pilgrimage. It accepts of sincere obedience, it provides influences for enabling believers to perform it, it provides pardon for failings.

5. Study acquaintance with the springs of that covenant-peace which believers enjoy in their walk with God. It is not their own merit, but God's mercy; it is not their own blamelessness, but the efficacy of Christ's blood to take away spots; it is not the evenness of our walk, and our freedom from trips; but it is the testimony of a good conscience, bearing witness, that it is our exercise to have and "keep a conscience void of offence, toward God and man," by continual dependence on God in Christ, for mercy to remove sin, and, grace to help in time of need. Endeavour to understand these things well, and you will then be soon eased of many of your fears.

6. Acquaint yourselves with these marks of grace, which point at its being, rather than its degree, and are to be found in the soul, under all its temptations. Such are these which we named already, and cannot now stand to repeat.

7. Pray for the influence of that Spirit which searcheth the deep things of God, and can let in such a beam of light into the soul, as will clear to you fully what is your state.

8. Once more, I say, wait upon the Lord in the use of all means, and then ye shall know your state. There is much of sovereignty in God's way of dealing with people, about this assurance now sought after. "When he giveth quietness, who can give trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him?" Job xxxiv. 29. Therefore wait his time. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and

hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain," James v. 7. "Light is sown for the righteous," Psal. cxvii. 11. Impatience, frowardness, sloth, and weariness, are indications of a soul not in a very good state; therefore wait, for it is "good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God," Lam. iii. 26.

Thirdly, We come now to speak to such as can upon solid grounds say, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, that they do believe on the Lord Jesus. We had once some design to hold forth your duty at length from another scripture; but this we shall wave, at least for some time, and only at present bespeak you very shortly.

1. Has God wrought the work of faith with power in you? then bless his name. "Take the cup of salvation, call upon the name of the Lord," and offer praise to him, "who remembered you in your low estate, because his mercy endureth for ever."

2. Walk humbly with your God. Pretences to faith, without humility, are most vain. It is peculiar to faith, to lay man low, that God alone may be exalted.

3. Ye are by faith ingrafted in Christ, then bring forth much fruit; for hereby will he be glorified, and hereby will ye make it appear, to your own satisfaction, and the conviction of others, that ye are ingrafted upon that Root of Jesse.

4. Ye have by faith acknowledged Christ your head; depend on him for influences of light and strength, that he may be all and in all to you.

5. Be tender of his honour and glory. The honour of your blessed Lord and master should be dear to you, and will be so, if ye be indeed his disciples.

6. Pity those ye have left behind you in black nature, "without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world."

7. Endeavour their salvation. Commend Christ and religion to them, by your practice and by your conversation.

8. Sympathise with, and seek the good of God's people, to whom ye are joined in society, under the blessed Mediator's conduct and government; that it may thereby appear that ye are members of the same body, of which Christ is the glorious and exalted Prince and Head.

Conclusion, We have now, for the space of eight Lord's days, laid before you who are in a state of nature, your sin, misery and hazard. We have for fifteen or sixteen Sabbaths more, insisted on the way of your escape, and have urged you to betake yourselves to it.

Now, I shall conclude all with that question of the prophet, Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" What man, what woman, is there in this congregation, that has believed our report, in the discovery we made either of sin, or of the Saviour of sinners? Are there none at all? Have we spent our strength in vain, and laboured in the fire? Have we cast the gospel net so often, and caught nothing? Shall we give this melancholy account of our embassy to you? Lord, we came to the congregation of Ceres, and displayed thy terrors before their eyes; yet none was alarmed. We proclaimed a Saviour, but none received our report. They would none of thee, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Must we, with Elias, be made to intercede with God against you? If we be put upon this, we have a heavier charge against you, than he had

against Israel. "Lord," says he, "they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars," Rom. xi. 2, 3. But we may say, Lord, they have killed thy Son, rejected thy gospel, and mocked thy servants.

Now, as for you who have not believed our report, I have two or three words to leave with you. (1.) Ye are the plague of the church, the burden of the land, the Achan in our camp. No sin has so great a hand in the Lord's quarrel, as unbelief. (2.) Ye are the cumberers of the ground; and who can tell but God, who has spared you long, and dunged and digged about you, may issue forth that command, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" (3.) The Lord be judge betwixt you and us. We have warned you, and ye will not take warning: we have offered Christ, and ye have refused him. What will ye answer at the bar of God, when ye and we shall be sisted together, and we shall tell, Lord, we offered thee to these wretches; but they would none of thee. (4.) "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of that glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

To you, if any such there be, who have believed our report, we say, (1.) We bless the Lord who has given you counsel, and desire to join in an eternal song on your behalf, and to bear a part in that blessed concert, where your salvation will come in as one of the grounds of the song. (2.) Whatever God has done for you, ascribe the glory of it to him, and to him alone; for from the laying the corner stone, nay, from the first wound of the ground in digging a place for it, to the putting on the copestone, all is his doing, and his only. If we have been instrumental, pray for us that we may be found of him in peace at his appearance, and may be helped to a faithful discharge, and a successful management of our work, to the good of souls. (3.) Dearly beloved in our Lord, since we "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," from heaven, "who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," stand fast in the Lord: for what is our hope, our joy, our crown, our glory, in the day of the Lord? Are not even ye, if ye stand fast in the Lord? Prepare for sufferings. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must travel through hardships and difficulties. It is the character of the glorified saints; they are a people "come out of great tribulation, who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb." Prepare, stand fast; and he who is able shall "present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy," Jude, ver. 24.

To him be glory in all the churches. Amen.

THE
GREAT CONCERN
OF
SALVATION.

PART III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY, WITH RESPECT TO BOTH PERSONAL AND
FAMILY RELIGION.

And if it seem evil unto you, to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve ; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood ; or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell ; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.—Josh. xxiv. 15.

THIS verse is a part of the last discourse, wherewith Joshua, the famed captain-general of Israel, entertained that people at Shechem, whither he had called them together, that he might speak his mind to them before his death, as we may understand from the beginning of this chapter.

And in this farewell discourse, he first reminds them of the humbling story of their forefathers' idolatry, before the Lord called them in the 2d verse ; and thence to the 14th verse, he entertains them with a short rehearsal of the Lord's remarkable kindness, in the whole course of his providence to Abraham, and to his seed, for near the space of five hundred years ; that is, from the time of Abraham's being called to the present time, wherein his seed were put in the peaceable possession of the land of Canaan, according to the promise made to Abraham. After this, in the 14th verse, he infers, from the whole, a serious exhortation to serve the Lord, of whose goodness they and their fathers had so ample proofs, and to abandon those idols whom their fathers served on the other side the flood, the river Euphrates, and in Egypt.

And in the words we have read, he presses this exhortation.

1. By an argument. And,
2. By a declaration of his own resolution.

The argument lies in the first part of the verse, "And if it seem evil," &c.

For opening it, we are,

1. To see what the argument is.
2. How it is expressed.
3. Why it is so expressed.

As for the argument, it is shortly this : If, while I exhort you to serve the Lord and abandon strange gods, I press you to nothing but what is evidently your interest, as well as your duty ; then surely ye ought cheerfully, and of choice to comply. But so it is clearly ; for what can be more evidently for your good, than to abandon idols, which your

fathers found it their interest to leave, and which were not able to deliver you from your slavery in Egypt; and idols which were not able to defend their worshippers against you, and to cleave to that God of whose goodness ye have had large proofs, and your fathers also for a long tract of time? This is the argument.

Next, We are to look how it is expressed; and we find that it is proposed,

1. By laying down a supposition, "If it seem evil," &c.

2. By a sort of concession upon that supposition, "Choose ye this day," &c.

First, We say, he makes a supposition, "if it seem evil unto you," &c.; that is, if, after all that ye have heard and seen of the vanity of idols, and the advantage of the Lord's service, ye can find just reason to think it for your hurt, I am not to hinder you from choosing where ye may do better. Now, this supposition imports the evident absurdity of the thing supposed, as much as if he had said, If ye seriously consider things, it cannot but seem just, reasonable, and for your interest, to serve the Lord.

Secondly, We have, as it were, a concession, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" that is, if there be any with whom ye may be better, look out for them and serve them: and this, as the supposition, implies also a strong insinuation of the absurdity of that which seems allowed, as much as if he had said, it is clear as the sun, if ye leave the Lord, ye can no where be so well; and therefore were ye left to your choice, and did choose well, ye must serve God; reason and interest bind you to it.

That which we are to consider, is, why this form of expression is used; why is one thing in appearance said, and the contrary meant? He supposes, that it may seem evil to serve the Lord, when he intends it highly absurd that it should do so: he refers it to them to choose another, when he means, that it is foolish to think of such a thing. For answer, this way of expressing it gives the argument several advantages.

1. It clearly proposes a very advantageous and engaging discovery of God, as one that, in the proposal of duty, has such a regard to man's advantage, that he would bid him do nothing but what is for his interest; as if he had said, If this were not for your good, and what may evidently appear to be so, I would not press it on you. Again,

2. This expression sets in a clearer light the absurdity of that which he dissuades from. Had he pressed them only by a plain proposal of the advantage of the Lord's service, they might have heard this without a due impression of the evil of the contrary course; but now they cannot miss to see how hateful it is, when it is, as it were, proposed to them to consider and choose.

3. Thus, by proposing what at present must appear detestable, it only obliges them to an acceptance of God's service, but to a plain and suitable declaration of their abhorrence of the service of idols. This effect we see it had upon them; for they usher in their answer with a 'God forbid;' which expresses a detestation of the way refused.

4. This serves to insinuate a suspicion of them, which might oblige them to declare themselves with more plainness, and with more vehemency and concern; which might be a standing witness against them and

their posterity, when straying from God. Now, having opened this argument, we shall next offer a few observations from it, and so on to the next part of the verse, which is the thing we design to insist on.

And, of many observations, we only offer the few following.

1. Every man is obliged to serve some god. This the argument not only supposes, but insinuates as a thing ridiculous, or so absurd, that it is not to be supposed, that any rational man can be guilty of rejecting all gods: they must serve God or idols.

2. The Lord binds no man to any thing but what is for his good, and what may, and will, upon due consideration, appear to be for it.

3. The Lord will have such as serve him, to do it upon a rational conviction of the advantages of his service; and therefore says, "If it seem evil unto you," go where ye may do better.

4. The Lord fears not the issue of a fair deliberation, and the serious consideration and comparison, both of what may be said for him and against him; and therefore he bids them look if they could, upon a due consideration, prefer idols to him.

5. Such as look well to idols, will soon see the folly of them. It is but look to them, and ye must abhor them.

6. To be satisfied who is to be preferred, God or idols, requires no long time to deliberate: it is but look, and ye shall be satisfied, Choose ye this day. Ye may be clear on the point, says he, this very moment, before ye leave the spot.

Thus far have we considered the argument. We have next Joshua's own resolution: "But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

This being that which we had the principal regard to in the choice of this text, we shall more particularly notice every thing in it. And,

1. We have the thing resolved upon, and that is the Lord's service. Service, though it be sometimes more strictly taken in the scripture, yet here is, no doubt, to be taken in its full latitude, for the whole of that obedience that the Lord Jehovah, who has only the indisputable title to our obedience, requires. He is Lord; and we are universally in all things, in all respects, subject to him, and therefore obliged in all things to serve him, to whom we are accountable. Whence by the bye observe, (1.) God has an unquestionable title to man's obedience; he is the Lord, in a way of eminence, to whom obedience is due from all. (2.) There is something engaging in God's service, sufficient when known, to engage man to make it his choice, notwithstanding that strong inclination he has to command, and that eager desire he has of liberty.

2. We have in the words, the resolution itself: "We will." There is no constraint in it. It is our choice: not only do we look upon it as our duty, that which we are bound to do, but we look on it as our privilege, and our will is set upon it as good. Whence we may again note, (1.) People should serve the Lord willingly: this is a binding example, one approved of God, and proposed to our imitation. (2.) Such as know the Lord's service will make it their choice.

3. We have the person by whom the resolution is taken; Joshua, an old man, who had followed God through a wilderness, and many trials; and Joshua, a great man, a great general. Here it may be remarked, (1.) That a long trial of God's service, even when attended with no small outward disadvantages, will not make any forego it, but rather

engage them to it. (2.) It derogates nothing from the character or the greatest to serve the Lord. (3.) As the head of a family may prevail much upon those in the family, so his whole interest in them, and influence on them, whether children or servants, ought to be employed in order to engage them to serve the Lord.

4. We have in the words the firmness of the resolution insinuated, partly in the declaration of it, and partly in the adversative particle *but*: "But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." "But as for me," this form of expressing it seems to import these three things. (1.) That he himself had considered the matter seriously. (2.) That he was come to a firm resolution. (3.) That whatever way their choice should fall, it would have no influence upon him, to alter him. Whence observe, (1.) Acquaintance with God fixes people immovably in his way. (2.) Such as do in earnest engage in God's way, from their own acquaintance with it, will not depend upon others in their resolutions.

5. In the words, we have the extent of his resolution: "As for me, and my house:" which imports, we conceive, (1.) A desire of the people's engaging to do so, and is as much as if he had said, I would have you resolve upon it; and were ye as much under my influence as my house is, I would use my utmost interest to persuade you. (2.) A direct declaration of his own resolution to keep firm to God's service. (3.) An engagement to improve his utmost interest, whether by authority, persuasion, or example, to engage all his own family to follow the Lord; as if he had said, if I cannot prevail with all whom I would have engaged in the service of God, yet I shall want none of those whom I may have any influence on. Whence observe, (1.) Real religion will make men careful that they themselves serve the Lord. (2.) It will not rest there, but will lead us to do our utmost for engaging others.

6. We have in the words, the order; he first speaks of himself, and then his family: whence we may note, (1.) True religion looks first inward to a man's self. (2.) Where a man is right engaged himself, he will use his utmost endeavours to have his family engaged also in the service of God.

Now, the design of this resolution, we may from the whole see, is to enforce the duty exhorted to in the former verse; and it has a considerable influence this way.

1. In that it speaks the thoughts of a wise man to favour the way of God.

2. It contains the thoughts of a dying wise man in favours of God's service; and, finally, of one that they stood under many ties to have a special regard to.

We design not to discourse all these truths: we shall therefore take up the sum of this resolution in three truths, which, if the Lord will, we design at some length to insist on.

DOCT. I. "Such as engage in the service of God, ought to do it deliberately, resolutely, and willingly."

DOCT. II. "True religion begins at home;" or, "A man must be himself a servant of God, before he can engage others aright."

DOCT. III. "Where a man is himself engaged in the Lord's service, he will endeavour to have his family engaged also."

The rise of these truths from the words, we shall not insist upon, because it is sufficiently clear from what has already been said in opening them.

We shall now begin with the first of them, "That such as engage in the service of the Lord, ought to serve him resolutely, deliberately, and willingly."

That we ought to serve the Lord, innumerable scripture precepts require, and even the light of nature testify.

And that we should do it deliberately and resolutely, our Lord, in the parable of the foolish builder, who counts not the cost, Luke xiv. 28. plainly enough teacheth.

Nor is it less plain, that willingness is required in order to acceptance, since it deserves not the name of service that is constrained. Where the will is wanting, nothing can be accepted: and where this is, many imperfections will not hinder acceptance, 2 Cor. viii. 12. For if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

But that we may further clear this truth, we shall,

I. Show what it is to serve the Lord.

II. Show what it is to do it deliberately, resolutely, and willingly.

III. We shall inquire, why we are obliged to serve the Lord willingly, deliberately, and resolutely

IV. In answer to an objection that may be moved from the doctrine of faith in Christ, as we have formerly preached it, we shall endeavour to show, what place there is for such service in the second covenant, and what necessity of it even to believers.

I. We are to begin with the *first* of these: and, that we may open unto you this head, we shall comprise that account we are to offer of the Lord's service in a few remarks. And,

1. Though, by the service of God, the scripture means many things, and uses the expression in several senses, yet there are three things principally and mainly called the service of God in the word. (1.) There is the solemn service of God in the duties of his worship; so we may understand our Lord's words to the tempter, Matth. iv. 10. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (2.) There is the ordinary service of God in the course of our walk with him: Of this it is the apostle speaks, Heb. xii. 28. "Let us have grace to serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear." And (3.) There is the extraordinary service of God, in some notable duties, called for of some persons, in some special seasons; and from their compliance with those duties, they are called the servants of the Lord: and thus Moses, Rev. xv. 3. is called the servant of God, in a way of eminency. They who got the victory, are said to "sing the song of Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the song of the Lamb." All these three significations are here intended, at least none of them can be secluded. We must serve the Lord in the duties of his worship, in the whole course of our walk, endeavouring to do always the things that please him; and when called to extraordinary duties, we must not decline them.

2. There are three things requisite to fit a man to serve the Lord, or to do any thing that can justly challenge that name. Men are not natu-

rally fit for the Lord's service; and they far mistake it, who think that they may, just when they please, put their hand to the Lord's work, and do it right. Nay, before ever we can do any thing that God will own as service, we must, (1.) Give up with our old masters. We are all by nature the servants of Satan and sin; "for their servants we are to whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," Rom. vi. 16. And no less sure it is, that we all naturally serve and obey divers lusts: but now we must renounce these, before we serve the Lord: for we are assured, that there is no serving two masters. The Lord will not half it with sin, Matt. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon." And, I assure you, this is no easy matter to get a sinner and his old master fairly parted; no less than the mighty power of God can do it. Sometimes there may be outcasts, but matters are quickly made up betwixt them, and all agreed again, until God himself effectually persuade to a separation. (2.) There must be a fair engaging to Christ as our Master. We must accept of him for our Lord. A master will not allow one to come in, and put to his hand to his service, unless he first covenant and engage to own him for his lord; and this is no easy matter, to bring a sinner, who is naturally an enemy, to come this length. To call Christ Lord, is something more than to resolve, under a conviction, to live better, and serve the Lord: nay, it is somewhat more than, under some work on the affections, to go to a corner, and make or write a personal covenant. I fear, personal covenanting, however good and justifiable in itself, yet is far mistaken, and much abused by some; while it is made a ground of hope by some, who never understood what conversion meant, never were humbled, and taken off their own bottom, and engaged to the Lord by the power of his grace. If any man think this an easy matter, to call Christ Lord, he has never yet done it to purpose. I am sure, the great apostle thought it no easy matter, but a thing so far above the line of nature, that the work of the Holy Ghost is required to bring us to it, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (3.) Before any can serve God, he must have a heart suited to the word. The carnal man is not subject to the law of God, but opposite to every duty. Before the fruit be good, the tree must be good. It is one of the many mad attempts that a deceitful heart, and deceitful devil, put people upon, under convictions, to serve the Lord, in newness of life, with old hearts: But they who have learned of Christ, Matt. vii. 17. that the tree must first be made good, before the fruit can be so, will know other things. First we must be created in Christ, and then we may walk in good works, Eph. ii. 10. Now, not one piece of service that is acceptable can any perform, without these three prerequisites.

3. That ye may understand what it is to serve the Lord, we shall offer you this remark, that, before any piece of work performed by us can justly challenge this honourable name of service done to the Lord, it must have these six qualifications.

(1.) It must be a thing commanded, otherwise it is serving our own fancy, and not the Lord. 'The master's precept is the measure of the

servant's obedience. We never find the Lord approving any for doing what he did not command them; nay, we find him, even when he has forbid things, rather challenging the doers, because they did what he commanded not, than because they did what he forbade, Jer. vii. 31. "They have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." And to the same purpose is chap. xix. 5. "Who hath required this at your hand?" will one day be the entertainment of such services as are done without a command? And there is one command that puts them all to the door, Deut. xii. 32. "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

(2.) There must be a regard had to the authority of the command in the doing. If men shall, upon sinistrous motives, as very oft they may, do the things that are commanded, God will not reckon this for service done to him: men who cannot pry into the hearts of the doers, may; but such deceits take not with God. It is not obedience, that is not done because commanded. Is is frequently repeated in the erection of the tabernacle, that every thing was done "as the Lord commanded Moses," Exod. xvi. 34. and xxiv. 4. &c. and that to intimate, that Moses in every step had his eye upon the command; and so should we, in every thing, eye the command.

(3.) Every duty, that it may be service to God, must be done in the name of Christ. God will accept of no service but what is offered on this altar, Col. iii. 17. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him. In the name of Jesus is, [1.] By the command of Jesus, Matt. xvii. 20. Nothing, I am sure, can be done in his name, that has not the warrant of his command. [2.] In the name of Christ is in the strength received from Christ, Luke x. 17. It was the name of Christ, that is the power of Christ, that cured the lame man, Acts iv. 10; and it must be this that must enable us to duty. [3.] In the name of Christ, is in a dependence upon him for the acceptance of our service; for all our sacrifices must be offered upon this altar, which sanctifieth the gifts that are put on it. [4.] In the name of Christ, is to the glory of Christ. Nor will any service be accepted, that runs not in this channel.

(4.) Every piece of service, that God will own as such, must be done in faith: "For without faith it is impossible to please God; for whatever is not of faith is sin." Now, faith looks at the promise as its only security, both for through-bearing, acceptance, and reward.

(5.) Service must be done in the manner that is required. It is not enough that the thing be done, but it must be done in the manner that is commanded; for even this comes in as a part of the command, Psal. cxix. 4. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently."

(6.) Service must be done in the proper time. God has filled up our time with work, and every duty has its own time, and we must do every thing in its season. "Every thing is beautiful in its season;" and "to-day, if ye will hear his voice." If the command be, to-day, obedience to-morrow will not answer it. If any of these be wanting, then God will own no duty as service done to him.

4. To add no more, we offer this one remark, for clearing what is meant by the Lord's service; and that is, that one may be called a ser-

vant of the Lord, or claim this title, it is not enough to do some one piece of commanded duty; nay, nor is it enough to multiply duties. But, (1.) There must be an equal respect unto all God's commands: "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commands," says the Psalmist, Psal. exix. 6. The heart must be reconciled to all, and count them to be right concerning all things. (2.) There must be fixed bentsail of will towards a compliance with them all. A servant must have it to say, with the apostle, Heb. xiii. 18. that he is "in all things willing to live honestly." And, (3.) There must be a constant and permanent endeavour to comply with them. We must "show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end," Heb. vi. 11. And surely, if these few things were duly weighed, most who have hitherto looked upon themselves as good servants, would begin to be jealous of themselves, as mistaken in this matter.

II. We are next to show you what this deliberation, resolution, and willingness is, which ought to accompany an engagement in the Lord's service. As for the

First of them, deliberation, we shall open its nature in the few following observations, in as far as it respects our present purpose. That what we do in matters of great moment, ought to be done deliberately, is what none will deny; and therefore none can question the necessity of acting deliberately, when we engage ourselves to the service of God. Only some may be at a stand concerning the meaning of it, which we shall endeavour to open.

(1.) When we say that men should engage in the service of the Lord deliberately, we do not mean, that they should take a long, or indeed any time, to consider, before they do engage in the service of God, whether they shall do it or not. This is only requisite in cases where it is hard to discern what is advisable, and where duty doth not oblige to do any thing presently, without loss of time. Here all things are quite otherwise: we are born under an obligation to serve the Lord; and the reasonableness, as well as advantage of it, are so obvious that to be ignorant of them is to be culpably blind. Nor,

(2.) Doth this deliberation import any doubt or hesitation, whether we may do better elsewhere; this were wicked and highly faulty. But,

(3.) To engage in the Lord's service deliberately, is to engage upon knowledge of that service which we devote ourselves to. It is the sin, the folly of many, especially when some way convinced of sin, and the bitter issue of its service, that presently they resolve they will serve the Lord; but in the meantime they know not what it is to serve the Lord, either as to matter or manner. Most part think, that to serve the Lord is only to perform some of the external duties of religion, and that without respect to any of those circumstances we have mentioned. But all ought to know who are in case to serve the Lord, what service he requires, what way he will have it done; and all the particulars mentioned formerly, when treating of the first general head, for explication of this truth.

(4.) That one may be justly said to have been deliberate in this undertaking; it is necessary that he know so much of his obligation, both by duty and interest, to undertake this service, that nothing that may afterwards fall in his way may be able to make him think he has acted cross,

either to duty or interest, in the undertaking, or that he might have employed himself to more advantage otherwise.

(5.) A man that engages deliberately, will look to all the disadvantages, real or seeming, that attend this undertaking, and know when he engages, that the advantage will outweigh the disadvantages. And,

(6.) A man that engages deliberately, will know that what he engages in is practicable, and how it may be done. Upon the whole, to engage in the Lord's service deliberately, is to do it, after we are acquainted with the nature of the work, and have so much knowledge of the advantage and practicableness of the undertaking, that nothing that falls in or may occur afterward, may be able either to make us repent our undertaking, or quit it as impracticable.

Some know not the service they bind themselves to, and therefore engage rashly; and when they come to understand it, they find it not suited to their expectation, and therefore they quit it. Some know not the advantage of it, and therefore when the service of sin seems to bid fairer, they rue their bargain; others look not at some seeming disadvantages that attend the service of the Lord, and therefore they begin upon sight of them to wish they had not engaged in it: the Psalmist came near to this, Psal. lxxxiii. 13. And, in a word, some bind themselves, without ever thinking what strength the work requires, and where it is to be got; and after experience tells them, it requires more than they have, they are fair to quit it; but deliberation prevents all these. And thus much for deliberation.

2dly, We must engage in the service of God resolutely; that is,

(1.) We must lay our account with difficulties, not indeed from the service itself, for the Lord's "yoke is easy, and his burden light;" but from our own corruption and enemies, that oppose us in the undertaking. Every one that puts his hand to the Lord's work, must lay his account with fighting, as well as working: he must be like the builders upon the wall of Jerusalem, Neh. iv. 17. work with one hand, and hold a weapon with the other.

(2.) To engage resolutely, is to resolve not to quit the work upon account of difficulties, or say with the sluggard, "There is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the streets;" but to hazard all, and so surmount these difficulties, or die in the quarrel.

(3.) To engage resolutely in the Lord's service, is to do it upon a conviction, that we are not at liberty, upon the account of any real or seeming difficulty, to quit it; but that of necessity, we must not only engage, but in the Lord's strength we must, in spite of all difficulties, persevere to the end. But now,

3dly, This is not all; but further, we must engage willingly in God's service. Some do serve, but the want of this spoils all. Now this willingness,

(1.) Excludes constraint. We must not, like the slave that's bound, engage in the work for fear of the whip. Some multiply performances, others seriously, as they think, under awakenings of conscience, or sickness, resolve to serve the Lord; ay, but it is only fear, either of hell, or the lashes of conscience, that obliges them to it, cross their inclination: take these out of the way, and they would not serve the Lord.

(2.) Willingness excludes selfish regards, such as only eye the advantageous consequences of God's service. Some serve the Lord, like Jehu,

because they see it makes at present for their interest ; but if it were not so, they would act otherwise ; and some, out of hopes to get heaven for their service, do the same. But this will not do : this is indeed a kind of constraint ; for, could the service and its consequences be parted, the service would not be chosen.

(3.) Willingness imports a liking of the service, as well as the consequences, a suitableness in the will to the service, which makes even the service itself the object of our choice, and makes it, even when the consequences are not eyed, appear agreeable and pleasing ; and this can never be where the heart is not renewed ; for " the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. And, therefore, till a day of God's power change the heart of man, and create him in Christ Jesus to good works, there is no possibility of engaging willingly in the service of God, Psal. cx. 3.

III. We are now come to offer some reasons why we should engage in the service of God, deliberately, resolutely, and of choice. Of many we name a few.

1. It is suitable to the rational creature ; for we debase ourselves, and act not like rational men, if we act not resolutely, deliberately, and willingly, in a matter especially of so great moment. Not to act deliberately, speaks us foolish ; not to act resolutely, speaks us weak ; and not to act willingly, speaks us slaves.

2. The nature and honour of God make such service necessary. That service which is unbecoming a rational nature, cannot surely be acceptable to God, who is the highest reason. What is reproachful to the nature of man to perform, must surely be so to the nature of God to accept. If man cannot act indeliberately, irresolutely, or unwillingly, without reproaching his nature, surely the holy God cannot accept of what is so done, without reproaching his own : and if it be dishonourable for man to perform such service, as is not the fruit of deliberation, choice, and resolution, surely it is also dishonourable for God to accept it.

3. The nature of the service requires it ; for it is called, Rom. xii. 1. " Our reasonable service." It is so by way of eminence : and surely without those three properties mentioned, it cannot deserve that name.

4. Unless it be done thus, we are not like to continue in it : and this will be both dishonourable, and disadvantageous. What is rashly undertaken, is usually quickly given over ; what is irresolutely engaged in, is easily hindered ; and what is the fruit of constraint, cannot be permanent : and this spoils all ; for unless it be continued in, we lose what we have wrought, and all the length we have gone will not be remembered, Ezek. xviii. 24. " When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live ? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned ; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned in them, shall he die."

IV. The only thing remaining, is to show, what place now, under the gospel dispensation, is left for this service ; and that in answer to a common objection that is made against it, upon supposition of admitting the doctrine of faith, may some say, " If we believe, what ye not long ago taught, that we are justified only by faith, then what need of serving the Lord ? what need of holiness ? If the obedience of another must

be our righteousness before God, we may spare our pains; there is no need that we obey."

This objection is old indeed, and I may say it is new also. It is one of the many artifices that the enemies of the grace of God have made use of for discrediting the justification of sinners before God, by the imputed righteousness of Christ; and at this day, it is mightily urged by Papists, Socinians, and especially Arminians, who swarm in these lands; and therefore, before we come to answer it, we have two or three things to say in reference to it. And,

1. We do indeed confess, that any doctrine that has not a favourable aspect upon holiness, is to be suspected; and we do profess ourselves willing that our doctrines shall be tried by their influence upon holiness: and further, we do solemnly protest, that as soon as the charge laid against the doctrine of faith shall be fairly proven, we shall abandon it. But,

2. We are not resolved to quit it, because some men, whose lives and pens smell not over much of holiness, are pleased to allege that it favours not holiness.

3. We must say, it seems very hard to allege, that Calvin's doctrine of justification is an enemy to holiness, while the opposers and enemies of this doctrine, at the same time, nickname the maintainers of it, Puritans, Precisians, and I know not what, because they will not take so great a latitude in their practice as themselves; nay, frequently, because they cannot get their walk condemned, they pass a judgment upon their hearts, and usurp God's prerogative, calling them hypocrites.

4. We hope to show sufficient reason for holiness, and to give it a very useful room, though we allow it not that place which is due to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What place will you say has it? of what use is it? I answer by showing,

1st, What place it has not: and we say,

(1.) It is of no use in order to merit any thing, either in time or eternity, at the hand of God; it cannot merit or deserve the least temporal blessing; far less can it deserve heaven, and those glorious spiritual privileges that are there enjoyed: "What! can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Job xxii. 2, 3. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man," Job xxxv. 7, 8. Our goodness extends not to him, and therefore it becomes us when we have done all, to own that we are unprofitable servants.

(2.) Our service we do to the Lord, is not that upon the account whereof we are justified before God. When we stand at the tribunal of God, to be tried for our life, our plea must not be, Lord, we have served thee according to thy law, this will stand us in no stead; "for by the works of the law will no flesh be justified," Gal. ii. 16. Our service, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will be found wanting.

(3.) Our service will not be so much as a part of that righteousness, upon the account whereof we are to be justified before God. Christ will not halve the matter so, either he will be our entire righteousness, or not

at all. He will not compound the matter, for so we should have somewhat to boast of, and should not glory only in the Lord.

(4.) Sincere service, by the gracious acceptation of God, is not put in that same place, under the covenant of grace, which perfect obedience had in the covenant of works. This is contrary to the whole tenor of the scripture. But what need, will ye say, can there be of this service, since it is not allowed to have any part in our justification? We answer by showing,

2dly, And positively, That it is of very great use, and there is an indispensable necessity of it; and that,

(1.) Upon the account of the command of God. Now, this binds still, and would have bound though there had been no reward annexed to it; and this is still in force, for "this is the will of God, even our sanctification," 1 Thess. iv. 3.

(2.) It is indispensably necessary, in regard of the believer's voluntary engagement to it. When faith once gets a view of Christ, it says to him, as Thomas did upon another occasion, "My Lord, and my God;" and if once we call Christ Lord, we thereby bind ourselves to be his servants.

(3.) It is necessary from the new nature, regeneration. Believers are "created in Christ Jesus to good works," Eph. ii. 10. They are born again; they are partakers of the divine nature. Now, our Lord assures us, that a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit. Know, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not," John v. 18. It is as natural for the new man to be holy, as for the old man to be otherwise.

(4.) It is the necessary result of these principal graces of the new creature, viz. love and gratitude. Hear the great apostle Paul, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

(5.) It is necessary that we serve the Lord, in order to obtain the great ends which all believers do propose to themselves; as, [1.] It is the way to glorify the Lord, which is certainly the believer's main end; and hereby certainly is God glorified, if we bring forth much fruit. Hence that exhortation, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matth. v. 16. Again, [2.] It is the way to be made meet for the enjoyment of God, which the believer aims at, as one of his principal and most noble designs. Now, the more we abound in the service of God, the more meet we are for the enjoyment of God, who is of purer eyes than to keep up communion with those who are not holy. Justification is necessary to give us a right unto the enjoyment of God, and communion with him. Sanctification is necessary to make us meet for the actual enjoyment of it. Again, [3.] To serve the Lord, to be holy, is the way to perfect our natures, and to bring them to the highest pitch of perfection they are capable of. This is our wisdom and understanding, Deut. iv. 6. and consequently our glory and honour, to serve the Lord. Further, [4.] To serve the Lord, is the way to be useful to others. And this is one of the believer's great designs, and it is gained by this; for this is profitable both for their conviction and conversion; nay, and many other ways not now to be insisted upon.

(6.) It is necessary that believers serve the Lord, in regard of the great provision that the Lord has made for them under the gospel, in order to fit them for this service: there is an abundant provision of grace to enable them to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Now, upon these accounts, ye may see how necessary it is that we serve the Lord, though we are not to be justified by our service. And not a few other no less considerable grounds of obedience, under the New Testament dispensation, might be mentioned, were it not that we hasten to the application which now follows.

It now remains that we apply this truth: and we shall, in the first place, draw some few general inferences, for information from the words. Is it so, that they who engage in the service of God, should do it of choice, resolutely, and deliberately? Then,

1. It is not so easy a thing to engage in the service of God, as some may think; to get the will of man, that is obstinately set against God, brought to a compliance with his will in all things, is very hard: "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." And O what a mighty difficulty is it, do ye think, to do this after a deliberate view of all the difficulties of this service, and a discovery of its opposition to corrupt nature? Such of you as think it easy to engage in the service of the Lord, are yet to begin.

2. No unregenerate man is aright engaged in God's service; for no unregenerate man, after a deliberate view thereof, and the consequences of it, will engage, or can engage in it; and therefore, Sirs, think upon it seriously, if ye be not born again, ye are not yet servants of God.

3. We may draw this conclusion from the doctrine, that God has no mind to cheat his servants. All the plot of Satan and sin is to get people engaged before they think; for if they think, they despair of carrying their point: but God will have us deliberate. It is the peculiar glory of man, that he is capable of considering what he doth before he do it, and that he can weigh all the circumstances of actions; but profane sinners dare not do so; they dare not go alone, and consider what were the motives prompting them to what they did, what way they will make their account to God, what they have to expect after this life is done. To think of these things, and the like, would make them mad: but the godly man can go alone, and look to his whole actions, and do it without fear; and can look to all things past, present, and to come, without discomposure; and then he chooses the service of God; he does it deliberately: the Lord will have him to do so, and therefore he knows he is not circumvented.

4. We may infer, that there is a vast odds betwixt the service of God, and the service of sin. We cannot become God's servants without acting like men, acting rationally, deliberately, and resolutely: but, on the other hand, there is none can engage, or continue in the service of sin, but he must lay aside the exercise of reason, and act like a beast.

Did we not design brevity, we might improve this doctrine many other ways than for information, now discussed, viz. for trial, reproof, conviction, and caution. But we shall wave all these, and only insist upon exhortation.

Is it so, that we should not only engage in the service of God, but that we should do it deliberately, resolutely, willingly? Then, my friends, we entreat, and, in the fear of the Lord, exhort you all this

day, to make choice of the Lord for your God and Master, and cheerfully, resolutely, and deliberately, engage yourselves in his service; and with the people of Israel, say, and hold by it, "We will serve the Lord." This exhortation comprises the whole of our commission from the eternal God to you. If we prevail not in this, we gain nothing, nor can we do you any service, nor can ye do us any real kindness. If we prevail not in this, then ye are for ever ruined, and we have lost our labour as to you, your damnation is sure; the gospel will aggravate your sin, accent your misery, and we shall be witnesses against you: surely, therefore, it is of moment, and worthy of serious consideration, what ye will answer, what ye resolve to do. Instead of many motives I might use on this occasion, we shall answer some questions that will readily cast up in the minds of such among you as entertain any serious thoughts about the matter; and, in the answers to them, we shall couch motives sufficient, if the Lord breathe upon them, to persuade the most obstinate enemies; and, if the Lord breathe not, nothing will be able to effectuate this.

There are six questions will readily employ the thoughts of such as are in earnest about this matter. 1. Who is the Lord, that we should serve him? 2. Will he accept of service at our hand? 3. Upon what terms will he admit of us? 4. What work will he employ us in? 5. Whom shall we be joined withal? What wages will he allow? These are the most material concerns of one that means to list himself as a servant; if he get a satisfying answer upon all these heads, he must engage. Now, of each of these in order; and,

1st, Some of you will think, Who is the Lord that we should serve him? We know him not; and we would fain be some way acquaint with him before we engage, at least we would know who he is.

For answer to this, we say, It is very reasonable that ye know him, to whom ye submit yourselves, before ye do it; and would to God this method had been still followed by you, and then I am sure Satan had not this day had so many servants, nor Christ so many enemies. We cannot pretend to tell what God is; for none can search out the Almighty to perfection, but only we shall tell you, he has all the qualifications of a master that a servant that is wise could wish.

1. He is great, whom we call you to serve. Most kings on earth are but slaves; and to serve most of them, is but to serve them who are slaves to the basest of lusts; but "the Lord is a great God, and a great King, even the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the high and only Potentate, the Prince of the kings of the earth." None may compare with him for the excellency of his person. Thus saith the Lord, Isa. xlv. 8. "Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any." None is equal to him in the magnificence of his habitation. "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool," saith the Lord, Isa. lxvi. 1. None equal to him in wisdom; he is the "only wise God." And as for power, who can compare? For "what pleased the Lord, that hath he done in heaven, and in earth, and in all high places." And, in a word, he is the only Master, and all are his servants.

2. As he is great and honourable, so he is good. "The Lord is good and upright," Psal. xxv. 8. and in other places of scripture innumerable. The goodness that a servant would desire in a master, lies in three things, and they are all eminently in God; he is peerless in them all. (1). He

is a good Master, that puts his servants upon no work but what is suitable and reasonable. (2.) Who bestows on them, when careful, vast largesses, or great proofs of his bounty. And, (3.) Who is indulgent, compassionate, and merciful to the failings of his servants, when they do not willingly commit faults, nor obstinately persist in them. And in all these three respects the Lord is matchless.

That his work is easy, we shall afterwards show at more length; at present it is enough to tell, that he who cannot lie or mistake, has told us, that "his yoke is easy, and his burden light." And who knows not his bounty? who feels not the effects of it? His bounty is great above the heavens, and all share largely in it; for whatever there is of goodness and mercy in the lot of any, that is the fruit of his bounty. But besides the common effects of it, he has particular favours he bestows upon such as are eminently faithful. Look what marks of his respect, and what glorious tokens of his bounty, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, and the rest got, and that both in spirituals and temporals. Nor is his mercy less to them that fear him, because of their infirmities. Though he has taken all imaginable care to caution his people against sin, yet he will not narrowly mark iniquity with them, nor enter into judgment. "Little children, these things write I to you, that ye sin not: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." I John ii. 1. The covenant of grace is not behind with the covenant of works, in forbidding sin, and providing against it: the whole of it was revealed, preached, and written, that we sin not: but this is the peculiar glory of the gospel, that while the law leaves sinners sinking under the curse, the gospel sends and relieves them, and shows that there is "an Advocate with the Father."

3. The Lord is a faithful God; what bargain he makes, he will keep. Has he promised you a great reward? ye may depend upon it: "He is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent." If he make himself known to you by the name of God Almighty, as he did to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, see Exod. vi. 2. to make them believe that what he promised he was able to perform, I assure you, he will not fail to make himself known to you also, as Jehovah God, that gives a being to his promise; as he did to Moses, when he called him to see the accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham, in the deliverance of his people out of Egypt. But, being satisfied that the Master is worthy beyond compare, the

2d. Question will follow, Will he accept of us for servants? A question truly not impertinent, after the former answer; for it is no wonder though any that knows God, or knows himself, doubt whether he shall be admitted a servant of the Lord; and that they never saw any difficulty here, we fear not to tell them, that they serve an ill master to this very day, even the god of this world, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. But to the question we say,

1. The Lord has taken some servants, and owned them as such, even out of the race of fallen man. We hear him speak of his servant Abraham, his servant Moses, and David; and that is encouragement to thee: men they were, sinful men they were; and even the father of the faithful, was an idolater.

2. The Lord wants neither work nor wages for you; the work he gives his servants is even to show forth his glory; and this is enough

to employ innumerable millions more than have any being. And hence it is, that his servants many times find the work too great for them, and therefore call in all the creatures to praise the Lord. So we find the Psalmist calling upon fire, hail, snow, vapours, &c. to praise the Lord, Psal. cxlviii; and he concludes the book of Psalms thus; "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord, praise ye the Lord." Psal. cl. 6. Nor is there any scarcity of wages: as he has work for you, so his treasures are inexhaustible; there is no want of any good thing to them that fear him, for in him dwells all fulness.

3. We have this more to say for your encouragement, he will not cast out or reject you because ye are sinners. Hear what such a one, a sinner, a great sinner, has to speak to this purpose, 1 Tim. i. 12. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and injurious." See a sinner made a servant, and one of the first rank made a prime minister.

4. We have this further to answer, he calls you to his service; be then of good courage; arise, for the Master calls thee. Matth. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you," says our Lord: there is an invitation. The encouragement follows, "And ye shall find rest to your souls." And the reason is subjoined, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Sdly, Ye may next inquire, Upon what terms? I see he will admit; but, may be, the terms are too high. Nay, this shall not hinder, if ye have a mind; for there is nothing more engaging and reasonable than they are. And I shall shortly lay before you these six particulars, as the terms whereon he will admit you.

1. Ye must renounce your old masters. Ye cannot serve two masters; and therefore, if ye choose the Lord, ye must abandon the gods whom your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and the gods of the Canaanites, among whom ye dwell; that is, in plain terms, Ye must not serve Satan, ye must not serve divers lusts, ye must not serve the world, ye must not serve men; all other masters ye must forsake, for "ye cannot serve God and mammon." And sure this is no hard condition, but what every servant must lay his account with; and none have reason to do it with so much cheerfulness as they who quit sin.

2. Ye must be reconciled to him upon the gospel-terms. A master will not admit his enemy to his favour as a servant: who would keep in his house one that has a formed design to ruin him? Reasonable it is, then, to the highest degree, that before ye be admitted to the family, ye lay down the enmity that your hearts are naturally full of against God, and be reconciled upon the terms prescribed in the gospel, which are comprised by the apostle to the Philippians in two words, "Having no confidence in the flesh," and "rejoicing in Jesus Christ;" which are indeed equivalent to the other two words made use of by our Lord, "Deny himself and follow me." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and follow me." For what he adds about taking up the cross, is included in the latter words, "Follow me." And of the same force are the two first words mentioned, Phil. iii. 3. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh." Here shortly are the gospel-terms

as to acceptance with God, and justification before him; there must be no confidence in the flesh, no expectation thence. But what is that, the flesh, ye will say, on which we are not to rest, in which we are to have no confidence? I will tell you some things called so by the apostle, in the following verses of that third chapter to the Philippians.

(1.) He calls church-privileges so, external privileges: "Circumcised the eighth day;" that is to say, it is not enough that a man was baptized, that he got his communion, that he is a hearer of preachings, and the like.

(2.) Church-membership: "Of the stock of Israel." A man may be a Christian, and sprung of godly progenitors, and go to ruin. There are many who may cry, Father Abraham, may be of his seed, and yet go to the pit themselves for all that. Again,

(3.) It is not enough to be a member of the purest church on earth: this is flesh also. Paul was not of one of the tribes that degenerate; but of "the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews." A man may not only be a Christian, but a Protestant, not only a Protestant, but a Presbyterian; but if he lean to either, he is no servant of God, were he in principle never so staunch to both; it is flesh, and must not be trusted to.

(4.) To be of the strictest party of the purest church, is not to be trusted to; it is not enough that ye are one of the strictest among the Presbyterians, even one whom the world accounts a puritan. Paul was of the purest church then on earth, and one of the purest and strictest party, "concerning the law a Pharisee."

(5.) He not only was of the strictest party, but he excelled most of them, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church." It is not enough to be really of the strictest party, and even to outrun most of the strictest in duty.

(6.) He was not one that was concerned only for religion, and the honour of his profession, but he was blameless concerning the righteousness of the law. His religion led him to respect all God's commands; and his practice came so near to his principles, that nobody could lay any thing to his charge; great attainments, but he counts them all flesh; and they are so, upon a triple account: they are things most of them performed by man, who is flesh: they are tainted all of them with sin, which is the work of the flesh; they are done in subserviency to a carnal design, opposite to the spiritual design of the gospel; so that by flesh is to be understood whatever is done by man, or whatever is tainted by corruption, and that even after as well as before conversion; for the apostle excludes from any share in his dependence for justification, even attainments after conversion, while he says, "What things were gain to me," that is, while a Pharisee, "those I counted loss for Christ;" and then he subjoins, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss." The first expression, "What things were gain," was too narrow, because it comprehends only what he had before; and therefore he adds this most comprehensive one to supply that, "all things;" and that is the same with his own righteousness, which he would not be found in, in the following verses. In one word, to have no confidence in the flesh, is to trust in nothing that can be called our own, because done by us, that can be called flesh, as tainted with sin, and done by sinful man. It is not that we are not to prize church-privileges, nay, certainly it is a great advantage to

partake of the ordinances, to be of the purest church, and the strictest party, and the most zealous of that party, and to be blameless, to be, as we said, a Presbyterian, and the strictest, is duty, and our honour too: but yet we are to have no confidence in this; but we are to "rejoice in Christ Jesus." If conscience challenge, we are to flee to the blood of Christ, and sprinkle conscience by that. If we be carried to the bar of God, and there accused, all that is laid to our charge Christ must answer for it. If the law require perfect obedience, Christ has fulfilled all righteousness, and is made of God "righteousness to them that believe:" and this is our joy. If conscience accuse, and lay a great charge against us, Christ has died; and this is our joy. If any be so bold as to condemn the believer, God has justified him, while he raised Christ from the dead, as being fully satisfied with what he paid on the account of sinners. And, in a word, wherever we are straitened, there is still found ground of sorrow in ourselves, but joy in the Lord Christ, "in whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Now, if ye mean to serve the Lord, ye must, upon the same terms, be reconciled to him: ye must "have no confidence in the flesh; ye must rejoice in Christ Jesus."

3. He will admit you to be his servants upon these terms, that ye comply with all his commands. Ye must take up his cross, hate father and mother (that is, reject them with disdain, when they come in competition with him). Ye must cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye. But ye will say, This is hard. I answer, No master will admit a servant, but such as will obey him; and that these things are not really hard, is plain, if we consider, (1.) That all these things he will have us to part with, are prejudicial to us: if we must hate father and mother, it is only when they come in betwixt Christ and us; and we are bid cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye, when they offend, and offend so, that we must part with heaven if we keep them. (2.) We are only bid do these things, when the very doing of that which seems prejudicial to us, turns hugely to our advantage; for if we part with any thing for Christ, we are to expect a vast income, even to a hundred fold in this life, and life eternal after it. And, further, this will appear both reasonable and easy. For,

4. A condition on which God will admit us to serve him, is, that we do his work upon his own expense. If we go in God's way, we must go in the strength of the Lord. If we need, we must come boldly to the throne of grace for grace; and, in a word, if we mean to serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, we must have grace to do it, Heb. xii. 28. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." We must do all in the name of Christ, and that is, in his strength; for the apostle elsewhere tells us, that he "could do all things through Christ strengthening him." And Christ tells also his disciples, that they can do nothing without him; and sure I am, this is a very fair condition, for it makes the hardest work easy; it is all one to call a man with his present strength to a work easy to him, or to call him to a work far above it, and increase his strength in proportion to his work. And thus it is in this case; the strength of God's people is still kept equal to, if not above their work.

5. He will admit you to his service, but ye must wear his livery, and

that in general is holiness, for "holiness becometh the Lord's house for ever;" but more particularly humility; we are bid "be clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. The seraphs have wings to cover their feet and their face, that is, a clothing of humility in a sense of God's glory, and their own imperfections; and we must wear the same garb; we must not glory in ourselves, or our ornaments; but "let him that glories, glory in the Lord.

6. He will admit you to his service; but then ye must serve him for ever. He will have his servants to be for him for ever, and not for another; and when all things are as we would wish about his service, sure we have reason to say, that we love our Master, and we love his service, and we will not part; but let every one of us say, I and my seed, I and my house, and all that will take my advice, shall serve the Lord for ever. Upon these terms the Lord will accept you.

4thly, Will ye say, What work will he set us to? We cannot tell you all the particulars; and such as are engaging in service do not expect this; but I will tell ye all ye can desire about it.

1. It is easy work, in that forecited Matth. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." The service of sin is labour, and toil, and a heavy load: so in the 28th verse, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden." The service of Christ is easy, and in it his people find rest; a work that is a rest must be very sweet, and such is the Lord's work. Would to God we could make you understand that sweet repose and blessed rest there is in the service of God! O how engaging it would be!

2. It is a pleasant work: "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace," Prov. iii. 17.; and in keeping God's commands, as well as for keeping them, there is great reward, Psal. xix. 11

3. It is honourable. All the works that the Lord commands, as well as these which he does, are honourable and glorious, Psal. cxi. 3.

4. It is profitable. Godliness is truly great gain: it is profitable for all things; it has the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. If he call us to any piece of service, all the profit comes still to our account. If he call us to suffer, "then our light afflictions, that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. And in a word, the man "that is righteous is profitable to himself," Job xxii. 2. But,

5thly, Whom shall we have with us in this work? This is a very considerable point, and of great concern, because servants are not alone in the work, and very much of their comfort depends upon their fellow-servants. Now, as to this all is encouraging. For,

1. The glorious Mediator is not ashamed to serve the Lord: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1.

2. Angels join in serving the Lord; hence the angel took occasion to prevent John's worshipping of him, Rev. xix. 10. "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus."

3. The saints, the excellent ones of the earth, are joined in this work; all the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are

written in heaven. So that we see, as the work is pleasing, so the society is very engaging.

6thly, But if we say, What reward may we look for? I answer, though there were no reward, what is said is enough. But yet we say,

1. There is a reward, Psal. xix. 11. "And he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6.

2. This is a sure reward, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world was."

3. It is a durable reward; it is eternal; and we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, who serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28.

4. So great a reward it is, that "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive," 1 Cor. ii. 9. "In keeping them there is great reward," Psal. xix. 11. Upon the whole, we conclude, that whatever ye can desire, ye have here for your encouragement. A Master, great, good, and faithful, sufficient security of acceptance, the terms reasonable, the work desirable, the company incomparable, and the reward great and inviting.

But, may some say, We fear the preciseness of the way; ye oblige us to an intolerable strictness and rigorousness in our walk. We answer,

1. The way of God is indeed strict, and we can make no allowance for you to indulge any lust, not so much as to bow in the house of Rimmon.

2. If this affright you, truly we must say, that all is not right, the heart is not changed; for when once this is done, the difficulty is over here. But,

O then I fear, says the soul, that I shall not get a perverse heart kept in this sweet way, which is indeed a way of peace and pleasantness. And therefore,

3. Ye must look to God, that he may take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart to fear him; for there is a necessity for it, that the tree be good, and then the fruit will be so, and never till then. But,

4. It may be, the strictness you fear is not real, but imaginary; as, (1.) It may be, ye imagine it will not allow you to be joyful; but this is a fond vain delusion. Religion gives a man the most solid ground of joy: it gives him allowance to rejoice, it directs how to make joy run in the right channel, which makes it double; and then it superadds a command, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I say, rejoice," Phil. iv. 4. (2.) It may be, ye think it will not allow you the use of lawful comforts; but this is a vast mistake; it will not allow you to abuse them; but it bids you use them: "Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works," says the wise man, Eccles. ix. 7. (3.) You suspect it will not allow you to be civil and well bred. This is a shameless mistake: true religion makes men the most pleasant company in the world; it makes them gentle, meek, affable, not soon angry, loath to give offence, careful to please all men in all things lawful, fills their hearts with love, and makes them edifying in their discourse.

But again, may ye say, I will never be able for this service, it is too great a work for me. I answer,

1. It is truly said, ye can do nothing. "Without me, (says Christ), ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. Ay, but,

2. It is said to no purpose, unless ye say more, viz. That the Lord cannot make you able; if ye be willing, the Lord will make you able.

3. God is able to strengthen you with all might, according to the glorious working of his mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, to perfect strength in weakness, and to make the weak as David, and David as an angel of God.

Now, upon the whole, to re-assume my exhortation; my friends, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus, we obtest you this day, comply with our exhortation, "Serve the Lord, and choose him this day:" and if not, tell me. All things are fair, the service, the Master, the terms, the reward; and if ye have a mind to serve, there is nothing can come in your offer like this. This is what we seek, God is our witness; it is not yours but you. Through his grace, were we sure to carry this, we would have it at any rate, and nothing will please but this. And now, if ye refuse, we take God to record against you, that ye have had a fair offer, and have sit it.

Thus far for the first doctrine.

We come now to the second, which you may take thus, to be somewhat more clear than in the first proposal of it.

DOCT. II. "Such as have any true and sincere regard unto the Lord, and his service, will make their own religion, or personal religion, their first and main care." *But as for me, &c. first me, and then my house.*

I say, they will make it their first care, they will begin with it. Before they look what others are doing, they will first observe how all is with themselves. Again, they will make it their main care, they will be concerned mainly and most deeply, that they themselves be well stated with respect unto the Lord, and his service; but we do not say, that they will make it their only concern. Nay, they will be deeply concerned with the state of their families, and with the state of the church; but they will begin here at home, and look how they in their own service are stated. We say, they will make their own religion, or personal religion, their first and main care. When we speak of their own service, or personal religion, we call it so, to distinguish it from family religion, and from the yet more public service of God in our church-assemblies. We shall not spend time in proving this truth; what we offer, when we come to the reasons of the doctrine, will sufficiently confirm it. Now, then, in discoursing this truth, we shall shortly,

I. Tell you what it is in their own religion, or in their own serving of the Lord, that such as have a sincere regard unto him and his service, are first and mainly concerned about.

II. We shall offer you some reasons of the doctrine, and show you why they are first and mainly concerned about their own religion.

We begin with the

I. And, among other things, such as are truly sincere, and have any real concern for the Lord and his service, they will be deeply concerned,

1. About the reality of their engagement in the Lord's service: a

question it will be that will lie very near, and be much upon the heart of every one who is truly in earnest in this matter, Am I yet entered in the Lord's service? Have I accepted him upon his own terms, as my Lord and Master? Have I yet felt that powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, without which none can in sincerity say, "that Jesus is the Lord," 1 Cor. xii. 3.

This is the foundation of all; for if we be not in very deed his servants, in vain look we for his servants' allowance, their acceptance in, or their reward for their work. This, I say, is the foundation; and therefore the wise builder will lay it surely, will dig deep, Luke vi. 48.; that is, he will use his best and most vigorous endeavours to remove and take out of the way the rubbish that intervenes betwixt him and the Rock; and he will be sure to see it, and see that his foundation be laid exactly on the Rock. This is the first and great concern of a sincere soul, that they be not deceiving themselves, but that they be really engaged in the Lord's service.

2. Sincere souls will be deeply concerned about the soundness of their hearts in the way of the Lord. No heart can be sound in the way of the Lord, that is not renewed; and therefore this will be the care of every one who has any real regard unto the Lord, or his service, that they have a heart to fear and serve the Lord, according as the Lord has promised unto his people, Ezek. xi. 19, 20; and which we find the saints earnestly praying for, as being under the greatest concern to have it, Psal. cxix. 80. "Let (says the godly Psalmist) my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." And no wonder though they be brought under a deep concern as to this, since the Lord, who searches the heart, hath frequently missed and quarrelled the want of this, under the fairest pretences, nay, and the most sincere engagements; I say, sincere, as to any thing discerned, either by the persons themselves, or onlookers, as we find, Dent. v. 27, 29. The people, in the 27th verse, engage fairly to serve the Lord; and we have no reason to doubt their being so far ingenuous, that they really meant what they said. Say they to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." A fair engagement! But, ah! there is a lamentable want! A sound heart is wanting, and that will spoil all. This, I verily believe, they understood not. Moses scarce understood; ay, but God misses it, ver. 29. They have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children, for ever." Some of you think, and some of you will not stand to say it, Whatever faults be in our practice, yet, blessed be God, we have good hearts to God. O hellish delusion! He that thinks his heart is good, is blindfolded by the devil, and has a heart no better than the devil's; for "the heart," by the testimony of God, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9.

3. Such as have any thing of a real regard unto the Lord's service, will be mightily concerned about the singleness of their eye. Of how great moment this is, our Lord tells us, Matth. vi. 22, 23. Our Lord, in the preceding part of the chapter, had been directing them to whom he preached, as to the ends they should have: he tells them, that self should not be their end in their prayers and fastings; and their end should

not be to amass earthly treasure and riches, but that it should be God's glory, and the enjoyment of him, which is heavenly treasure indeed; and here he teaches the importance of being right as to the end: (1.) Plainly, ver. 21.; and, (2.) By this similitude, ver. 22, wherein he compares the main end, or the soul's intention, unto the eye of the body, and shows, that the direction of the whole life, and rectitude of all the actions of life, depend upon the sincerity and rectitude of the end, as the direction of the whole body doth upon the sincerity, and singleness, and clearness of the bodily eye. No wonder, then, that such as are in earnest about the service of the Lord be concerned about this, since the whole depends upon it. A squint look as to the end will quite spoil, and render altogether useless, the most fair and specious performances. "Take heed," says blessed Jesus, in the first verse of this same chapter, "that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them;" otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Many of you multiply duties, but, God knows, few look to their own ends and aim in duties. But take heed; ye see a squint look to the applause of men will make all to no purpose.

4. Sincere souls will make it their first and great care, that, in their serving of the Lord, they have a safe rule, as well as a single eye. Much labour may be lost to no purpose, if this be not looked to. And hence it is we find the saints in scripture mightily concerned about this, and looking, and that deservedly, on the word, as a "light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths;" and hence are they most earnest for instruction in the word, as the only sure and safe rule, directing us how we should serve the Lord. How earnestly, and how frequently does the Psalmist press this desire, in that 119th psalm throughout! wherein we have the mighty concern of the Psalmist, about the rule, clearly evidenced; and no wonder, since the Lord may justly send us, both for our sustenance in working, and our reward for when it is done, to those who prescribed us our work; for surely to serve the Lord, is to do whatever he commands us. We may not add unto the word which he commands us; from this we are bound up by an express prohibition, Deut. iv. 2.

5. Such as are indeed sincere, will be, in the first place, and principally, concerned about the diligence of their hand in the work of the Lord. What our hand finds to do, we are to do it with our might; and he is cursed with a curse that doth the work of the Lord slothfully. Much, therefore, it is upon the soul to evite, and how he may evite that curse, Jer. xlvi. 10. "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully," or negligently, as the word is rendered in the margin of some of our Bibles.

6. To add no more, they will be much concerned about their acceptance, and their pleasing him who hath called them to his service. If God accept, then all is well with them; and if he reject, then nothing can compensate the loss they have by his hiding; and therefore they lay aside all entanglements, that they may please him who hath chosen them to be his soldiers and servants, 2 Tim. ii. 4. Thus have we performed what we promised in the first place, and have showed you what it is in their own service of God, or in their personal religion, that gets the first and chief room in the care and concern of the Lord's people; and it is the reality of their engagement, the soundness of their heart, the singleness of their eye, the diligence of their hand, the safety of their rule,

and, finally, their acceptance in it. Before they look to other things, they first look to this, and this is first in their thoughts and concern. We are now,

II. To show the rise of this concern, and to tell you why such as have any sincere regard unto the Lord, or his service, make their own religion their first and main concern. Now, of this we may take the following reasons.

1. They will do it, because the command of God has a first and principal respect unto our own religion, personal religion. The commands are directed to particular persons: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make any graven image; remember thou the Sabbath day." And not only so, but their first look is to what concerns these particular persons immediately: it first binds thee as to thine own practice, and then calls thee to regard it with respect to others: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images;" and first thou art to "remember the Sabbath," and then to look that thy servant and stranger do so. We must begin at home, cast out the beam out of our own eye, before we look to the mote in our neighbour's.

2. Such as are sincere will look first and mainly to their own religion, because it is doubly important; important in itself, and important, because without it we are not in a capacity to serve the Lord, either in our families or in the public. If the tree be not made good, none of the fruit can be good. If we be not really the Lord's servants, if our hearts be not sound, our eye single, and our hand diligent in our own personal and private work, walk, and way, it is utterly impossible we should be so in the more public duties of religion.

3. They will be, and are, first and principally concerned about their own religion, because a due concern about our own religion is, if not the spring, yet one of the principal inducements unto, and effectual means for engaging with vigour and diligence, in the other more public duties of religion; yea, so necessary is the connection betwixt diligence in this and in the other, that public religion rises and falls, ebbs and flows, abates and increases, according as our personal religion rises or falls. When saints are in a good case, Zion will be much upon their hearts.

4. The truly sincere will make their own religion their first and main concern, because it lies most within their own reach. We cannot get our families, congregations, and far less churches, as we would have them; but what we may through grace reach, that we are obliged not to want. Though Joshua cannot get all Israel engaged in the service of the Lord, yet himself he may; and therefore, what his hand finds to do, what he may be able, through grace, to go through, is what he is engaged to do, and to do it with his might, Eccl. ix. 10.

5. Sincere souls will make their own religion their first concern, because upon their success in this, they have the greatest venture. David, though his house be not so with God, if he himself be right, may have peace. Ministers, who have been faithful, may through grace have peace, though Israel be not gathered. But there is an indispensable necessity that we ourselves be personally religious; "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

6. I may add, sincere souls will begin with, and lay out their main concern about personal religion, because the footsteps of the flock lead this way. And we are bid, when in search after the Lord, go our ways

out by the footsteps of the flock : now, we may see others who have gone before, and who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, taking this way. So we find Joshua doth, so we find David resolved to do, Psal. ci. 2. where first he resolves upon a perfect heart, and then a perfect way, and then to go to what was more public. And this much for the doctrinal part.

We come now to make some application.

Use 1. Of Information. Is it so, that such as have any sincere regard to the service of the Lord, begin at their own religion? Then,

1. We may conclude it a dangerous perverting of the order enjoined by the Lord, and followed by his people, to begin with a concern about the public. Some there are, and not a few there have been, who have lived either profanely, or at best in an estrangement from the power of religion, who all of a sudden, either from openly profane, careless Gallios, or dead and lazy formalists, turn mighty zealots, and, Jehu-like, outrun others in a mighty concern for the public, taxing all that is amiss severely : but none knew how they came by it ; they were never exercised about their own souls. This is a perverse method ; and Satan is here, though clothed as an angel of light. And this is exceedingly dangerous,

1st, To the person himself ; because, (1.) It mightily strengthens him in a proud and vain conceit of himself, while he sees not what is at home, but only sees himself abroad, where he runs before others ; and surely growth in pride is growth in all sin. God gives grace to the humble ; and if so, sure I am, the proud advance in gracelessness, and sin gathers strength. Again, (2.) It is dangerous to the persons, because this runs them commonly to such heights, that they can neither go forward, nor stand the ground they come to ; and therefore they must fall, and some of them fall into utter ruin, make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience, and are lost for ever.

2dly, It is dangerous to the cause they espouse : for, (1.) They take wrong means ; and the more we tamper with improper means, still the worse, and the further we are from our end. (2.) Their end is not right laid, their views not single ; and this, with the wrong steps they take in the way, is found really to do religion more injury, than ever their forwardness did it service.

3dly, It is dangerous to those who embark with them in the same work : For, (1) It sets them off from the true way of reaching the most excellent aims. And, (2.) It lays them open to a hazard of apostasy, and failing, when their leaders fall. Beware, therefore, of perverting the Lord's order.

2. We may draw this conclusion from the doctrine, that all concern about the public, that takes us off from a concern about our own souls, in the first and principal place, is dangerous, and to be suspected. It is dangerous to spend all our times, and talk, and thoughts, about others, while we are careless about ourselves.

3. It is a dangerous and terrible issue of exercise about our own souls, to lose it quite, before any real out-gate be got in the Lord's ordinary way, in a great deal, a flood of concern about the public ; and this is the issue of some exercises at this time. Some are for a while somewhat concerned about their own souls ; but all of a sudden this wears off, we cannot tell how, and presently there is nothing but zeal about the public.

We are obliged to speak of this upon a double account: (1.) To prevent the offence, and guard against the evil, that the falls of such persons may do, and give to such as are less established in the Lord's way; and, (2.) To guard people against a dangerous mistake, which is really dangerous, because it is a mistake, and a mistake in a matter of very high concernment, and most of all, because it is such a mistake so well masked with a white veil, that it is hard to discern it.

4. We may draw this conclusion, that such of you as were never concerned about your own religion, and that to some purpose, whatever ye think of yourselves, or whatever others may think of you, ye never struck a fair stroke about the public: if ye have done any thing there, ye have begun at the wrong end, and ye have no reason to expect acceptance at the Lord's hand.

Use 2. Is for trial. Is it so, that such who have any sincere regard to religion, to God, or his honour and service, do make their own religion their first and great concern? Then surely we are all concerned to try whether we do make our own religion our main concern. If we do not, then surely we are naught; and therefore it is of the highest importance to us, to be satisfied as to this, and to be distinct in our own thoughts about it. Now, that we may some way help you here, we shall enter upon a search for this concern, that we may know whether really we have been under any concern about our own religion, yea, or not. Now, past all peradventure, if we be indeed concerned about our religion, this will be found in our thoughts, in our affections, in our words, and in our actions; and therefore in all these we shall search for it.

1. We say, if ye be concerned about your own religion, then surely this concern will appear in your thoughts about it. And we shall therefore put a few serious questions to you, with respect unto your own thoughts.

(1.) Have ye any thoughts about what concerns your own religion? Some of you, I fear, dare scarce say, that ever ye think about God or his service, save only when ye are in the church, hearing the minister speak about such things; nay, I fear, that not a few of you do scarce even then think about your own religion. Do not many of you allow your thoughts to rove, ye know not where? or if ye listen to what is said, ye apply nothing of it; or if ye do, it is only to others. Is it not thus with many of you? Well, I assure you, ye have no religion, nor have ye any concern about religion; the wicked atheist's character is yours, "God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4. If ye think not of religion, of your own religion, not only when attending ordinances, but also at other times, ye have no concern about it.

(2.) Though your thoughts be some way and sometimes employed about this, yet ye may have no such concern as that which we inquire after; and therefore we pose you in the next place, do your thoughts run naturally, and as it were of their own accord, in this channel? Some people think about their souls, and the concerns of their own salvation, but never except when they are compelled to it; but surely this speaks them not suitably concerned about it. What a man is concerned about, his mind runs to it, as it were, without bidding. Ye are many of you concerned about the things of the world; well, if ye have a bargain of any moment which ye are concerned about, ye will not need to force your thoughts toward that; nay, Matthew vi. 21. "Where the treasure

is, there the heart will be," and therefore the thoughts will run that way; nay, they will run over the belly of all impediments. Is it so about your religion? Do your thoughts still run thither? If it be not so, then surely ye have no concern about your own religion. He that never thinks about his own religion, is never poring in his thoughts (except when driven to it) to know how matters are with him, whether he be a servant of God or not? I fear not to say, he is none, and is not concerned to be one.

(3.) Do your thoughts dwell upon this? Is the reality of your own engagement in the Lord's service, the soundness of your heart, singleness of the eye, &c. the subjects to which not only your minds run naturally, as it were, and of its own accord, but also that which your thoughts fix on? As our minds do readily run to the thoughts of that whereabout we are concerned, so they are strongly inclined to fix there, and the mind loves to exercise its thoughts about that, Isa. xxvi. 3. The mind or thought is stayed upon God. The man that trusts in the Lord, will desire to have his thoughts thus stayed. Is it so with you? If it be not so in some measure, then truly you have reason to think that ye have never been in earnest concerned about your own religion.

Object. But here may some poor exercised soul say, Now indeed, ye have found me; for I could never all my days get my thoughts fixed upon any thing that is good: still my mind gets away, and is carried off sometimes after one vanity, and sometimes after another.

To such I have a few things to offer for their relief. [1.] Is this straying of thy mind thy burden and grief? If it be, then surely it speaks thy soul desirous of fixing here. Again, [2.] Dost thou strive to keep thy thoughts fixed? Dost thou endeavour to fix them, and cry to God to fix them? If so, then undoubtedly thy mind is carried away violently by some enemy, and that is not thine own deed. Thy soul is desirous to fix, but something forces it off; either the power of thy domestic enemy, that enemy that is in thine own bosom, I mean sin, or of some foreign enemy, Satan or the world, shakes you; and this makes nothing against you. Therefore I say, [3.] Do ye, as oft as your mind is away, bring it back again, and that with grief and sorrow for its departings? If so, then surely ye have no reason to doubt your concern upon this account. Having thus obviated this exception, we proceed in our search; and,

(4.) We say, Do ye think frequently upon this subject? They who are deeply concerned about any thing, their thoughts will be frequently employed about it; so, if thou be concerned about thine own religion, many a thought it will cost thee. They will ever and anon look to the singleness of their own eye, the diligence of their hand, and the soundness of their heart; if they cannot get long dwelt, yet they will oft come to it, who are in good earnest in the matter. The religious man "meditates day and night in God's law," Psal. i. 2. He is ever thinking about the Lord's testimonies, and how far he is framed into a suitableness to them, or how far it is otherwise with him. Now, if it be not thus with you, truly ye have never been brought under any concern about religion to any purpose.

(5.) Are your thoughts about your religion distinct? Some there are, who have sometimes thought about their souls, but they cannot tell well what they mean by them, they are so confused: they think and

think on, and after, may be, twenty years' thinking, they are as far from any distinctness as before; but still they go on. Now and then they will have some thoughts, issuing in some work upon the affections, full as uncertain and indistinct: Is it thus with you? But that ye may know yet more clearly what ye mean by this question, I shall break it into a few other questions. And, [1.] I say, Can ye tell what that is in your religion that takes up your minds and thoughts? Many of you have, it may be, some thoughts, but ye cannot tell about what they are employed. Is it about singleness of your eye, about the sincerity of your heart? or, can ye tell whereabouts it is that ye employ your thoughts? If not, truly your concern signifies but very little, it will not stand you in much stead. Again, [2.] Have ye any distinct end in your thinking about religion? what design ye by thinking about it? Is it only to think, without thinking to any purpose? Some people both think and speak about religion, but I fear they are not aiming really at any distinct end; see Psal. xxvii. 4.; and the concern of such is but little worth. Ye think about your religion; well, what do ye expect or propose to have by your thinking about it? Would ye know your case, or what way to come out of it? what is the remedy of it? or how to apply it? Aim ye at such ends? If not, then truly all your thoughts are to little purpose. Once more, [3.] Get ye any distinct issue of your thoughts? Are ye like the door upon the hinges? Ye think, and ye never can tell what ye have got, or what ye have done, by all your thoughts. If this be all, then truly I cannot well tell what to think of your thoughts; I think, I may say, ye can have but little comfort of them.

(6.) What sort of thoughts have ye? People may have thoughts enow, and even about religion, and, it may be, such as do some way respect their own religion, and yet they are not much concerned about it, while their minds are only busied in applauding and flattering thoughts of their own case: but now, is it otherwise with you? Do you apply yourselves to searching and trying thoughts? have ye many jealousies and suspicions of yourselves? do ye often make diligent search into your own case? have ye many doubts and questionings? If your thoughts be not in some measure exercised this way, it is a sad evidence that ye are not, nor have ever been, under any true concern about your own religion: for such thoughts have the saints had, who have been in earnest in the matter; of whom we have a large account in scripture-history, particularly, Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

2. We shall search for this concern about our own religion, in the *affections*. Wherever we are concerned, all our affections will be employed about that, set upon it, or set against what is opposite to it. Now,

(1.) We pose you on it: Are your affections employed about your own religion? do ye grieve that things are wrong with yourselves? do ye fear that they may be so? do ye hate what is prejudicial to your own religion? do your souls cleave to any thing that may any way contribute to the bettering things with you? Say, my friends, is it thus with you? or is it not? I fear, I fear, that many of you who can sorrow and lament bitterly, if any worldly thing frame with, or fall out to you otherwise than as you would wish, yet never all your life-long knew what it was to be grieved indeed for sin, or that matters were not

right with respect unto your spiritual ease. Ye have no fears, no joys, no griefs, no zeal, nor any affections about these things. Surely then religion, your own religion, is not the one thing with you, your main thing; it is not: Nay, surely you have no concern about it: "Where the treasure is," or any part of it, "there will the heart be," Matth. vi. 20, 21.

(2.) Are your affections frequently employed about your own religion? have ye frequent fears, griefs, joys, and other affections from this spring? Man, woman, if thou art concerned about thine own religion, to have it right, thou wilt be oft looking to it; and every look will set thy affections to work one way or other. If thou findest thyself wrong, the soul will stretch its affections, like its wings, to fly out of that case; and if otherwise, it will, if I may so say, clasp them about what it has, to hold it fast. So David, when he thought upon his ways, and found them wrong, "made haste and delayed not to turn his feet to God's testimonies," Psal. cxix. 59. And the spouse, Cant. iii. 4. when she found the Lord in her embraces, "she held him, and would not let him go." He whose affections are not frequently employed about his own soul's case, surely he was never concerned about it as he ought.

(3.) Whereabout is the edge of thy affections, the favour and zeal of them employed? If this be not about thine own soul, thine own religion, truly thou art not concerned. Where there is any thing of true heat and warmth, ye know that which is nearest will meet with most of it, and partake most of it. If thou hast any affections about religion at all, then the heat of them, the fervour of them, will be employed about thine own religion; if there be a fire of zeal against sin, it will consume the beam in thine own eye, before it reach to the mote in thy neighbour's, Matth. v. 7. If it be not thus with thee, thy affections are not about thine own religion.

(4.) Hast thou any rest, whilst either thou seest ground to think thyself wrong, or art in uncertainty about thine own religion? Canst thou live quietly and easily while not settled as to the everlasting concerns of thy soul? If thou canst, thy affections are not set on, nor art thou truly concerned about, those which do belong unto thy peace. I know not what to say of some people who have no more assurance of salvation than of damnation, and yet can rest secure, and be quiet and very well content in that case: I can assure such, that they were never aright concerned about their own religion. Some doubt, and they never seek to be satisfied: May be I may be saved, sayest thou; may be thou mayest be damned, say I. What ground hast thou to hope that thou shalt be saved? If ye will speak what is true, ye will say, Truly I have none. But I have somewhat to say, as a ground of my conjecture: 1st, Thou deservest damnation. 2dly, Thou who canst sit still quietly in that case, thou wast never concerned to be saved; and I never knew one get to heaven who laid not salvation to heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

(5.) Thou hast, it may be, some affections about thine own religion; but when is it that they are moved? and what gives rise to them? Hast thou never these affections but when thou hearest a preaching, or when thou meetest with some awakening providence? Truly, if thou never hast any concern about religion, save when thou hast some external cause exciting thee, then thy concern about religion is of no great value. True concern about religion will turn the soul's eye inward, to com-

mune with itself, and take counsel in our own heart, how to get what is amiss amended; and this will set thy affections a-work; "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" Psal. xiii. 2. But, to go on,

3. Having searched the mind and affections, we come now to inquire for this concern in your words: and if there be any thing indeed of a real concern upon the soul about religion, herein it will appear; for, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matth. xii. 34. Now, that we may bring this matter to some issue, I shall put a few questions to you in reference to your words or discourse. And,

(1.) I pose you on this, Do ye ever keep up any converse, any discourse with yourselves? and if ye do, whereabouts is it? Do ye never commune with your own hearts? If not, then surely ye do but little regard your own interest. He that never converses with his own heart, is not under any concern about the state of his own soul, and will undoubtedly be found among those who, while they are busy about many things, do yet neglect the one thing necessary. The Lord commands it, and our soul's case requires it, that we commune with our own hearts, Psal. iv. 4. and lxxvii. 6.

(2.) What discourse have ye with the Lord? Have ye any converse, in prayer, in meditation, or ejaculation? If ye have none, then surely never were ye under any concern about his service; and if ye have any converse with him, if ye speak to the Lord, and this be not the thing ye have been speaking to the Lord about, it speaks you not under any concern: for we find saints have been ever most concerned about this; and, in the account we have of the saint's exercise, we see clearly the most of their words employed about this.

(3.) What converse, what discourse have ye, when ye meet with the Lord's people? Is it what may be some way subservient to this glorious end? Are your words employed in telling what God has done for your soul, or in learning what he has done for others? "Come here, all that fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul." Psal. lxi. 16.

(4.) What sort of discourse like ye best to keep up? is it about this great concern? or is it about any thing else? Look to it, that converse that ye like best, is like to speak what your soul is under the greatest concern for: if it be converse about the world, ye are lovers of this world; if it be about the faults of others, and the public, pride predominates; if it be mainly about your own souls, it speaks somewhat of concern about them. But now, in the

4. And last place, we shall look to your deeds, that we may see what it is that lieth nearest your hearts, and whether ye be under any due concern for religion, and your own religion. And here,

(1.) I would ask you, What work put ye your hands to? Is it the work of your salvation? we are bid "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. Now, is this the work ye employ yourselves about? or, are ye busy about other works, while this is neglected? I fear, with most this is but little heeded: ay, but if ye were under a true concern about your own religion, then, [1.] There would be much time employed about that which directly tends to, and, one way or other, has somewhat of an immediate influence upon your salvation. And, [2.] All your works would be done in a subserviency to this end. Now, is

it so with you, or not? Do ye pray hard, and wrestle earnestly with the Lord about your soul's state? Are ye much in believing, much in mortifying sin, holding under the body of sin? Is this the work ye are busied about? Some of you, we fear, never thought about this work; and as for you, it is no hard matter to tell what your case is, ye are yet strangers to any real concern about religion.

(2.) What work are ye most diligent about? what is it that ye apply your might to? Do ye "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure?" 2 Pet. i. 10.; or, are there not among you, who in any other business will work hard, toil sore about it, but if once ye be put to work about this matter of the highest importance, ye presently fall dead and lifeless, to such a degree, that all is presently out of case with you: ye are weary, before well begun, of any work that has any near relation to your own salvation. If this be your case, then ye are under no real concern about your religion.

(3.) What work are ye most concerned to have carried forward, and brought to some comfortable period? Can ye not be well enough pleased, if your other business frame well with you, and go right in your hand, though the work of your salvation lie behind? or dare ye say, that no attainment in salvation-work is able to satisfy you, till you reach the recompense of reward? Do ye indeed forget the things that are behind, and press forward unto this? Can nothing short of assurance as to your calling and election please you? If so, it bodes well; and if otherwise, it makes a sad discovery of want of a suitable regard to that which ye indeed ought to be mainly concerned about. Surely he that can rest satisfied, though salvation-work be far behind, provided other things go well, is not under an equal concern for salvation and for these things; the other things are certainly preferred by him.

Now, if ye have been using your judgments in any measure, ye may know whether ye be, or have been, under any real concern about your own salvation, or whether ye have made your own religion your first and great concern: and therefore we shall proceed to speak something in a more particular way, to the several sorts of persons of which this assembly may consist. And here we shall speak,

1st, To those who are under no real concern, whether about their own religion, or that of others.

2dly, To those whose religion lies much, or mainly, in a concern about others, and about the public.

3dly, To those who are indeed under a deep and special concern about their own religion; the public they would fain have right; but their exercise is, first, to be sure that they themselves are so, and then they contribute their share to put matters otherwise right.

4thly, We shall apply this truth to all, in some exhortations suitable to the scope of the truth insisted on.

Now, of each of these we shall speak very shortly. And,

First, We are to begin with those who are under no concern about religion; and to such we shall speak some things, *1st*, For conviction. *2dly*, Expostulation. And, *3dly*, Terror.

And to follow this order, *1st*, We shall speak some things for your conviction; though this be the case of most of you, yet we fear few of you will take with it; and therefore, notwithstanding all that has been

already said for your conviction, we shall yet offer two or three words more. Aud,

(1.) We say, men and women, did religion ever take up your hearts and heads? was it ever really your exercise, to know whether ye were right or wrong? Did ye ever put it to the trial, whether ye were Satan's slaves, the devil's vassals, or the servants of the Lord? if not, to this very day ye are Satan's servants, and never had any concern about religion.

(2.) Did you ever lay down this conclusion, I am lost, undone, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked; I want faith, I want grace, I want God, I want Christ, I have destroyed myself? If not, then ye never have been under any concern of a right sort.

(3.) Did ye ever resolve upon it, that go the world as it will, and come what will, I have no concern like my soul; and therefore I shall never be at rest, or take ease, or be quiet, until I get matters in some measure right betwixt the Lord and me? If ye have not been brought under some such resolutions as this, from a conviction that all is of no avail to you, if ye lose your soul; then surely to this very day, ye are perfect Gallios in God's matters, and your own most precious interests.

(4.) Can any thing give thee content, while thou livest altogether at peradventures about salvation, about Christ? Then yet hast thou reason to fear, that thou hast never been concerned about that which thou canst be pleased without, I mean salvation, and an interest in Christ.

2dly, Having offered some things by way of conviction, we shall now a little expostulate with you. Aud,

(1.) Can ye be, were ye ever concerned about any thing? Did ye ever think seriously, speak seriously, or act seriously about any thing? If not, thou art certainly a fool, a madman. If thou hast, then,

(2.) Man or woman, is there any thing equally worthy of thy concern, as the salvation of thy soul? What art thou profited if thou gain a world, and lose this? And mayest not thou be happy if thou save this, though thou lose a world?

(3.) Thinkest thou, then, to save this without concern? Think it not: for not only must thou strive, must thou run, but every running, and every striving, will not do the business; and therefore thou must so strive, and so run, that ye may obtain.

(4.) Is it not thy wisdom to prevent that, which, if once it come, cannot be remedied, I mean the loss of thy soul? Know "the soul's redemption is precious, and ceases for ever." Psal. xlviii. 9.

(5.) Canst thou, wilt thou sit as unconcernedly, when God is sinking thee into a sea of brimstone, as now thou dost when he is threatening to do it? If not, bethink thyself in time, ere it be too late.

(6.) Are ye not ashamed to be unconcerned about this, about which all others are so deeply concerned? and yet none of them have so great an interest in the matter as ye. The devil is concerned; he goes about seeking whom he may destroy. Will not ye be concerned about the preservation of that which he and all his instruments are so much concerned to destroy? Ministers are concerned; they preach, they pray, they sweat, they think, they toil, many a trembling heart have they for fear of your ruin. They spend their time and strength about your salvation, while many times they fear, that by this means their own salvation be neglected. And now, whether, I pray, have ye or they most concern in this matter? They may, if they be faithful, yea, they will go to heaven,

whatever come of you; are ye then mad, so far to overlook your own great interest? God is concerned: can ye doubt of it, while he is held forth in the gospel, as bleeding, dying, weeping, sweating blood, and all to prevent your ruin? Can ye doubt of it, while he is heard inviting, calling, entreating, promising, offering, protesting, nay, and even swearing, his concern in the matter: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God," Ezek. xviii. 32. and xxxiii. 11. And what need has God of any of you? "Can ye be profitable to him, as he that is righteous is profitable unto himself?" Consider this, and be ashamed, and horribly confounded, O careless unconcerned souls!

3dly, We now come to speak a word for terror to you: know then for certain,

(1.) That soul which ye will not be concerned to save, ye shall lose: and will any thing make up the loss? what will all the world profit you, while ye have lost a precious soul, without hope of recovery?

(2.) That damnation which ye were not careful to prevent, shall be your portion; and who among you "can dwell with everlasting burnings? who among you can dwell with devouring fires?"

(3.) These things which now ye are concerned about, and pursue with so much eagerness, shall be your everlasting tormentors; and what profit will ye have of these things, whereof then ye will be ashamed?

(4.) When all this misery shall come upon you, there shall not be any concerned for you; when this shall come upon you, then who shall be sorrowful, or lament for you? God will "laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, Lo this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness," Psal. lii. 6, 7. But we proceed.

Secondly, The next sort of persons to whom we promised to speak, are they who are indeed under some concern for religion, but their main concern seems to be about public matters, the carriage of others, and miscarriages of those who are in any public trust; and they relish converse about this most of all, and spend most of their time this way. What we are to say to those, is not to dissuade any from a due regard to the public, but on design to obviate some dangerous extremes. Now to such we say,

1. Whatever any may account of you, ye have reason to suspect and be jealous of yourselves: we have showed, from the word of the Lord, that where there is any thing of a sincere regard to the Lord's service, it will show itself, (1.) In a deep concern to have and keep matters right at home; and since your main concern lies another way, truly your religion, though your pretences be never so high, or the thoughts of ministers or others never so favourable, is deservedly suspicious, and you have reason to doubt it: and I will tell you some of the grounds whereon, (1.) I am sure your hearts are, as well as those of others, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and would willingly deceive you. (2.) I am no less sure, that while you are much abroad in observing others, and little at home in self-judging, self-searching, and self-condemning, they have a special advantage for deceiving you, which they, no doubt, will not lose. (3.) Your dislike or light esteem of those things which speak a spiritual healthy constitution, with your liking to

those things that discover a vitiated spiritual palate and senses, gives me ground to fear you are not right. When people love not so well to hear the sweet and plain truths of the gospel, as continual reflections upon public failings, it discovers a spirit embittered and rankled, and not under due impressions of its own deep concern in the plain gospel-truths: "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. When once people begin to grow weary of the preaching of Christ, and him crucified, and of hearing the way of salvation, the means of salvation, the marks of grace, and soul-exercise, the Lord's work and way of translating souls out of darkness into his marvellous light, and of carrying on the work of salvation to a blessed period; when once, I say, this cannot be heard, and nothing is relished but debates, though about truths, and precious truths of God, I must say, their religion is, if not quite wanting, yet very low. (4.) I am much afraid of such, because pride is strong in them, and is encouraged in both its parts. It consists in low thoughts of others, and high thoughts of ourselves: Now both these parts of pride are strengthened; for, [1.] What way can be more effectual to sink others in our own esteem, than always to pry into, discourse of, and judge them for their faults, real or supposed? Again, [2.] What can raise us higher in our own conceit, than to look little into our own hearts, these filthy sinks of sin; to look at ourselves, when, like Jehu, we appear very far beyond others in zeal for the Lord, and to compare ourselves with others, when we have debased them as low as we can? Thus is pride fed; and where it grows strong, all grace will languish: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," James iv. 6. Much more might be added, upon the most clear scripture-evidences: but we go on.

2. We say to such, However specious like your services have been, you have reason to be jealous of them, and to fear the want of an ingredient that will spoil all, I mean singleness as to your aim. Many are deceived as to this matter; and ye have reason to be afraid. If the tree be naught, assuredly the fruit is so too; and what ground ye have to suspect the former we have hinted just now; fear therefore the latter. A squint look to a bye end, will be a dead fly; it will make the finest ointment stink; and God knows there is ground to fear, that there may be some such bye look. What we might offer for clearing of this must be passed by; for our design will not allow us to enlarge upon those particulars.

3. We say to you, Look to yourselves; for whenever trying times come, you will be meet tools for the devil to make use of, to ruin the church of God. The church has ever suffered more by false friends, and the mistakes of the really godly, especially when going to this extreme, than by open enemies; and I will tell you several grounds upon which I am apt to think, that ye will err and wander from the way, and that to your own wounding and to the wounding of the church. (1.) Your carriage casts you without the reach of God's promise of guiding, in such times. It is the humble, and not the self-conceited Christian, that the Lord will guide: "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way," Psal. xxv. 9. (2.) You will be easily persuaded to neglect the means of guidance, I mean, an attendance upon Christ's faithful ministers. This sort of people have many prejudices against ministers, and it is easy to drive them to the height of deserting their minist-

try; and then surely they are an easy prey to every seducer, and to every fancy. Christ's direction to his spouse at noon, that is in times of adversity, and when it is hard to know who is right, who is wrong, is to keep close by faithful ministers. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents," Cant. i. 9. (3.) In that time offences will abound: and if thou wilt break thy neck upon the faults, either of ministers or of Christians, thou wilt not want stumbling-blocks, and the devil will be sure to improve them all, to nurse you up in the good conceit thou hast entertained of thyself, and in undervaluing thoughts of others. Many more of the like sort we pass.

4. I shall leave you, with this one awful warning, who have any hankering toward this extreme: Beware lest, while ye expect to be rewarded of the Lord for your public zeal and concern, ye be damned for want of personal godliness. Read, consider, and tremble, at that awful beacon of the Lord's holy jealousy in this sort: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew ye; depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matthew vii. 22, 23. Here are men far forward in public appearances, and yet damned for want of personal godliness. For the Lord's sake, remember, and fear that ye fall not into the like condemnation. Neglect not the public: but O begin at home, and employ your first and great care there; and when ye go abroad, be sure ye keep within your own sphere. But,

Thirdly, Leaving this sort of people, I come, in the next place, to speak a word to such as are indeed under a deep concern, and that first and mainly about their own souls, though they dare not forsake Zion; with Joshua, they would have all Israel choose the Lord: but whatever come of this, one thing they take care to be sure of, that they themselves are God's servants. Now, to such we have only a few words to say.

1. Sirs, what ye have, hold fast. Say against this order who will, we dare say it is God's, and will be owned by him; and if ye hold on, I dare in God's name say unto you that ye shall be helped, and honoured to stand by him, when others, whose pretences are high, will turn their back on him: ye shall bring forth your fruit in its season, as the tree planted by the rivers of water, Psal. i. 3.

2. I say to you, Beware of such as would divert you from this course; hold at a distance from such whose conversation has any tendency to beget prejudices against a gospel-ministry and ordinances. Assuredly, their steps take hold of death, and lead to it, pretend what they will; God never ordained his babes to live without milk, and some to feed them also. If once ye be prevailed with to disgust your food, all will quickly grow wrong with you: if you want it a while, hunger will go off, and you will be filled with wind, and will not be aware till ye just die. If ye have got any good of ministers and ordinances, I say to you, hold by them, and beware of any thing that may deprive you of the advantage of them, or lessen your benefit by them. Deserting ordinances will entirely deprive you of the advantage of them, and prejudices nourished against them will make your advantage less.

3. Beware of spending your time, and of such as would draw you to spend your time, in love-killing and prejudice-hatching debates: "Only

by pride cometh contention, but with the well advised is wisdom," Prov. xiii. 10.

4. For the Lord's sake, make earnest of growing in religion. What ye have happily begun, take no rest till it come to a blessed issue: "Press forward toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. Forget the things that are behind, and press forward. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." And ye shall undoubtedly reap in due time, if ye faint not. I now proceed,

Fourthly, To shut up the whole in a few words of exhortation to all. We had some thoughts of branching this exhortation out in several parts; and we indeed justly might do so; but designing to conclude this second doctrine presently, we shall wrap all up in one.

Is it so, that such as have any real regard unto the honour of the Lord, do make their own religion their first and great concern? Then, my friends, let me, in the fear of the Lord, beseech, entreat, and obtest you, to be concerned about your own religion: make this sure by any means; serve ye the Lord, take others what course they will; and even begin at this; make this your first and great care. For,

1. This is the foundation of all; and as the foundation is right or wrong, so it will fare with the whole superstructure. This is the root, and as it is good or evil, so will the fruit be; this is the spring, and if any thing be amiss here, all the streams will partake in the evil and hurt; O therefore by any means make all right here.

2. Make this your first and great concern, for it will be herein, and with respect to this mainly, that ye will be tried; all the trials that the Lord brings on his people, do still try this, how matters are here, whether the foundation be right laid, and how far the work is carried on.

3. Death and judgment will be comfortable or bitter, as it is right or wrong with you in this respect. Your salvation and damnation depend upon it: "He that believeth not shall be damned; he that believeth shall be saved." He that for his own part betakes not himself to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation in the gospel-method, shall assuredly be damned, come of others what will.

4. Make this your first and great care; for truly the defect of this is the spring and true source of that lamentable defect of family-religion, and of a due concern for the public, which is matter of deep concern to all that fear the Lord this day. What! is it any wonder that the man that takes no care of his own soul, be unconcerned about the souls of others? How can he that is posting to the pit himself, take care of others, and endeavour to preserve them from running to their own ruin? Never will any reasonable man believe, that he who goes on in sin himself, will, in his station, be really zealous for repressing it in others. Unless we prevail with you to be concerned about your own souls, we despair of getting you any way serious in reforming your families.

5. Make this your first and great care; for this will help you to employ your zeal the right way, in reforming others; it will make you first concerned for their souls, and have them built upon a sure foundation. It is the folly of some professors to be always for debating, when they come into conversation with persons that they suppose, and it may not be without ground, are strangers, nay, and enemies to religion; and

that not so much to bring them to acquaintance with the power of religion, but to be of their judgment, in some points of controversy that are tossed in the day we live in, which I do confess are of very great moment. But here they mistake; for they should first endeavour to bring the man under a real concern about his soul; and then you have brought him one step towards the embracement of any principle or practice that is according to godliness: and if ye gain not this point with a graceless man, a man that is not exercised to godliness, it is of no great consequence what his profession be, Papist, Prelatist, Presbyterian, or any thing else; for he will be true to no profession: it is not a real principle that holds him; and he is ready to be, upon any temptation, a scandal to that way which he cleaves to. O make your own religion your first and great care, and this will learn you where to begin with others.

6. O make personal religion your first and great concern; for alas! here it is that the main defect is among you. We have oft complained, and we have daily new reason to complain of you, that many at least among you are going in the broad and most patent roads to the pit, some in that of ignorance of God, others in that of drunkenness, some in that of abominable oaths, and swinish lusts, and others in that of devilish revenge and contentions, always leading down to death and destruction, and that openly. I know most have long since laid down a conclusion, that they shall have peace, though they walk in the way of their own hearts, adding drunkenness to thirst, one sin to another. But assuredly ye are deceived: "Be not deceived: thus saith the Lord, Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, not effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. And the same shall be the fate of cursers and swearers: "Then said he to me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side, according to it, and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name. And it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof," Zech. v. 3, 4. Now, are there not such among you? Are there not unclean persons, swearers, drunkards, and the like, among you? And ye who are such, have not ye need to be concerned to be religious? Sure ye have none as yet. And now, to bring this home to you, let me pose you upon three things. (1.) Do ye believe that the words ye have heard are the words of God? If not, then begone, you have nothing to do here. If ye do, then, (2.) Do ye hope to get to Heaven, when God has said, ye shall never get there? If ye do, ye are mad; and if ye do not, ye are mad; if ye hope to get to heaven in spite of God, assuredly ye are mad; and if ye believe there is a heaven, and yet live in that which ye know will debar you thence, ye are mad indeed. (3.) If God, by a gospel-dispensation, prevail not so far with you, as to make you leave the open road to hell, is he like to prevail with you, to bring you over to a compliance with the gospel-call entirely? No, no, surely no. My friends, look in time, be concerned in time: for, as the Lord liveth, ye are in imminent danger, danger greater than ye are well aware of; and

whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear, know, that if ye die, your blood is on your own heads; ye have got warning. Take warning, and make personal religion indeed your first and great concern.

7. O make your own religion your first and great care; for here many are deceived; many have a name to live, who are dead, and appear to be something, who yet, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will be found wanting, and have a *Tekel* written upon them.

8. To add no more, consider seriously how sad a deceit in this matter is. O terrible deceit, to mistake heaven, and instead of it slip into hell! To mistake the broad road, and think it the narrow! How terribly will the poor deluded souls, that swell with the hopes of heaven and glory, look, when, instead of falling into the rivers of pleasures, they shall sink like lead in the mighty waters of God's holy, just, and terrible indignation against sin! As ye would not meet with this terrible disappointment, look to yourselves; make sure your own religion; lay the foundation well, and then ye may have peace, and the Lord will establish it. Now, for your direction, I shall only offer two or three short words.

1. Bring yourselves to the light, to the standard of God's word, and try yourselves by that which is the true test, the balance of the sanctuary, the counsel of the Lord, which shall stand.

2. Whatever judgment the world passes on you, though it read your name amongst the black roll of those who are doomed to the bottomless pit, hear it, and believe it, for assuredly the scripture cannot be broken.

3. Cry to the Lord, that he may give his Spirit to open your eyes, to know how matters are with you.

4. When God, by his word and Spirit, has wounded you, wait upon him for cure, in the same way; for it is thence also you must have your acquaintance with the blessed Physician, Jesus Christ, in whom alone your help is.

Having thus finished the second doctrine, I now proceed to

DOCT. III. "Such as are sincerely religious themselves, will take care that their families, and all whom they can have any influence upon, be so too." Or shortly thus: "Such as are sincere will be really careful to maintain family-religion: But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Which shows us, (1.) That God requires household religion, even that we and our houses serve the Lord. Now, what is not required, or commanded, cannot be service done to the Lord. (2.) That we, and our houses or families, should join in, or perform jointly, some part of service to the Lord. (3.) That a master of a family is called to take care of, and may engage some way for his house or family their serving the Lord.

Now, in the further prosecuting of this point, we shall show you,

I. Wherein family-religion lies.

II. Whence it is, that such as are sincere are so much concerned about it, as we here find Joshua, and others of the saints in scripture.

I. Now, we begin with the first; and shall only here observe that family religion consists of three parts, or is comprehensive of the three following particulars. 1. Family-instruction. 2. Family-worship. 3.

Family-government, or order. And about these it is that a religious master will be concerned; and he that is not in some measure carefully exercised in these three, there is reason to fear he has no religion. Now, we shall a little open these three unto you. And,

1. We say, that family-instruction is that which such as are sincerely religious will be careful of. Assuredly there will be nothing that will lie nearer the heart of a conscientious master of a family, next to the salvation of his own soul, than the salvation of his family, his children, and servants; and one part of his care will undoubtedly discover itself this way, in a deep concern to have them accurately instructed in the knowledge of their duty toward God, their neighbour, and themselves; and, in a word, the whole of that knowledge, which is necessary, in order to their walk with God here, and their enjoyment of God hereafter. And this part of family-religion we find the Lord very punctual and express in commanding, Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9. "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up: And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." In which observe, 1st, Personal religion enjoined: "They shall be in thine heart." 2^{dly}, Domestic religion: "Thou shalt teach them diligently." Here also we have a plain account of this first part of family-religion, and a clear command for it; we see who they are about whose instruction we are to concern ourselves; it is our children, and those who are in our house, that is children and servants; for under the notion of children, servants are frequently comprehended, as particularly in the fifth command. There it is agreed by all, that under that of parent and child, all relations, and particularly master and servant, are comprehended. We see also the manner how this duty is to be managed, and that is diligently. And this is yet more particularly opened, as to the ways and seasons wherein we are to evidence our diligence and special care of the instruction of those under our charge. Now, two ways we ought to manage this piece of family-religion. And, (1.) By precept: (2.) By our walk. We ought to teach them diligently both ways; we ought to inculcate and carefully press upon them the knowledge of the Lord; and what we thus teach them by word, we ought strongly to enforce by a suitable walk. Parents and masters should be in case to say to their children and servants, with Gideon in another case, "Look on me, and do likewise," Judg. i. 17.; and with the apostle, Phil. iii. 17. "Be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample." Then are children and servants like to be won over to a compliance with the will of the Lord in his word, when it is not only clearly held forth to them in word, but when also it is pointed forth in a lively and speaking example. If the Spirit of God gives us ground, as it does, 1 Pet. iii. 1. to believe that a holy and shining conversation, without the word, may prove effectual towards the winning over of unbelievers toward the embracement of religion, what may we expect, if the word and such teaching be joined together! Surely we might think to see somewhat else than what is to be seen at this day. And O how hard will many find it to answer for

their defects here, in that day, when they shall stand at the bar of God! Nay, would to God we might not say, for their direct counteracting duty, in both these respects, while instead of instructing them in the fear of the Lord, by example and precept, they run them forward, to a course of sin by both! O prodigious villany! and yet common among men, among Christians!

2. Family-worship is comprised under family-religion, as a principal part of it; every family should be a little church unto the Lord: and so we find mention made of the church of God in houses, or of families being churches unto the Lord, "Greet (or salute) the church that is in thine house," Rom. xvi. 5. and elsewhere; and, past all doubt, every family ought to be a church, wherein God should be solemnly worshipped, both on ordinary and extraordinary occasions; so Job's house was, Job i. 5. Now, of this family-worship, the more ordinary parts are three.

(1.) Solemn invocation of the name of God by prayer. Our Lord teaches us to join together in prayer, by putting the persons praying in the plural number in the Lord's prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." Again, "Give us this day our daily bread." Our dependence upon God, not only in our single capacities, but as we are members of families, requires suitable acknowledgments of the Lord; and our want of family-mercies requires our joining in craving them by prayer from the Lord. Our guilt of family-sin requires family-acknowledgments, and applications for pardon; and therefore assuredly families, whether greater, as nations, or lesser, which call not upon the name of God, shall have the Lord's fury poured out upon them, Jer. x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and on the families that call not on thy name." Where, by families, we are to understand all families, whether greater or lesser; for surely if nations, in their national capacity, be called to worship the Lord, and call upon his name, so also lesser families are; and for their neglect, are liable to the same vengeance.

(2.) Solemn reading of the word belongs to family-worship. What can be more plain to this purpose, than the command we have formerly quoted from Deut. vi. 6.; and this we are to do, that the "word of the Lord may dwell in us richly, in all wisdom," Col. iii. 16.

(3.) Solemn praises are also required, as a part of family-worship, and undoubtedly as family-sins and wants call for family-prayer, so family-mercies require family-praises, and bring us under the apostle's injunction, in that forecited, Col. iii. 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

3. It remains that we open the third and last branch of family-religion, viz. family-government; and this lies in several particulars: (1.) In commanding the family, children and servants, to walk in all the ways of obedience. This is that which the Lord so highly praises in Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19 "I know him, saith the Lord, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," &c. (2.) In obliging, by reproof, admonition, and correction, such as are in the family, to abandon any thing sinful and scandalous in their practice, Gen. xxxv. 2. "Then Jacob said unto his household,

and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." Here we have an eminent example, both of family-worship, and family-order; and indeed, as to the deportment, I mean, as to the outward man, and what is to be seen of servants and children, we see from the fourth command, that parents and masters of families are accountable for it to the Lord, who has not only enjoined them to keep the Sabbath-day, but to take care that all within their doors do. (3.) This lies in expelling such out of the family as do, notwithstanding the use of these means for their reformation, persist in walking contrary to God. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." Here is the spring. See what follows: "He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me; he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight," Psal. ci. 2, 6. Here we see a lively character of one that has a true regard to the maintenance of family-religion. How rare are such instances in our day! But leaving this, we shall proceed.

II. The next thing we proposed, was to show whence it is that such as are sincerely religious themselves will be careful to maintain family-religion. We might indeed, for the proof of this truth, have mentioned and illustrated the eminent examples of pious care about family-religion, recorded in scripture; but what we are to allege under this head will supersede that, and will sufficiently prove the doctrine, and show, that there is an indissoluble tie betwixt sincerity and a regard to this.

1. Then, persons who are themselves sincerely religious, will be careful to maintain family-religion, because they have a regard to all God's commands. The authority of the Lord, wherever it is stamped, binds them to a compliance. Sincerity has for its inseparable companion, a respect to all God's commands: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commands," Psal. cxix. 6. And from this respect to the command it is that a care about family-religion flows; for undoubtedly it is a part of commanded duty. We are here told, it is a piece of service to the Lord; and what is commanded is only so. What he never required, that he will never own as service done to him; but what has been alleged from the word of God, under the former head, puts this beyond dispute.

2. This regard to the maintenance of family-religion, flows from the very nature of that supernatural principle wherewith all that are truly sincere are endued, which in scripture is called, the new heart, a heart of flesh, a new creature, a new spirit, &c. This principle being suited and framed to an universal compliance with the Lord's will, aims at this in all things. They who have it are said to be "created in Christ Jesus to good works," Eph. ii. 10. And particularly, as the old heart would be in all respects independent of the Lord, so, on the other hand, this new heart is strongly bent to acknowledge its dependence on the Lord, in the ways of his own appointment, in all its ways, in all stations and relations wherein it is put: and hence, as it leads to own the Lord in our single capacity, so it leads also, if we are possessed of it, to do so in our family-capacity; and, in a word, as it leads us to worship and serve the Lord ourselves, so it powerfully influences to lay out ourselves to have all others to serve the same Lord, more especially such as we may have influence upon, our children and servants.

3. Such as are sincere have an entire love to the Lord, and hence a delight in all ordinances, private as well as public, and secret, wherein any measure of communion with the Lord may be reached. "Lord," says David, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth," Psal. xxvi. 8. The Lord's honour dwelleth in all his ordinances, and in every place where he records his name; that is, in every ordinance, there he meets with his people, and there he blesseth them. And indeed by family-religion the Lord is signally honoured; for thereby we, (1.) Acknowledge, that we hold our families of the Lord, that it is to him we owe them, and say by our practice what worthy Jacob said, Gen. xxxii. 10. "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." Again, (2.) We hereby own our families, and all that we are, to be still in the hand of the Lord, and at his sovereign disposal; while all the advantages and mercies we want, and would have or enjoy, and could wish continued with us, we apply to him for them by prayer; and all the evils we would have removed or prevented, we likewise look to him for their removal and prevention, acknowledging him the Author of all our mercies, in the continual ascriptions of praises to him. In this way we acknowledge plainly, that of him, and through him, are all things, in whose hand is the breath, and all the concerns of every living thing; who kills and makes alive, wounds and heals, makes rich and poor. And, in a word, hereby we own him the uncontrollable Lord of all: "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh, and blessed be the name of the Lord. He doth what pleaseth him; and who may say to him, What dost thou?" (3.) These acknowledgments honour God, in that they are public, whereby God's glory is manifested to others, and they instructed, and excited by example unto the like acknowledgments. Assuredly, therefore, they who love the place where God's honour dwells, and that which contributes toward its manifestation, as all sincere souls do, will not dare to neglect this family-religion, whereby it is so signally furthered.

4. Such as are sincerely religious will be careful to maintain family-religion, because they have a sincere love to those in their house. They love their neighbour as themselves; and no way can love manifest itself more than in a due care for their salvation, leading to the use of all those means whereby this is promoted. Memorable to this purpose are the Lord's words concerning Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19. "For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Here we have a double connection, very remarkable. (1.) A connection betwixt family-religion, a due care of it, and its success. He will command, and they shall keep the way of the Lord; he will take due care, and his care shall not be in vain: "Train up a child in the way wherein he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Ordinarily an universal care this way is not altogether without some influence upon some in the family; and if we save one child, one servant by it, is not this a rich reward for all the attendance we can give to it? (2.) There is a connection betwixt the success and the promised blessings: "They shall keep the way of

the Lord, and the Lord will bring on Abraham, and his seed, all the good things that he has spoken." So here we see of how great consequence it is to those in our families; it is the way to make them religious, and that is the way to make them happy.

5. Such as are sincere will be careful to maintain family-religion, from the conscience of the charge they have of them. Masters and parents have the charge of their families, and are in some measure accountable to God for them. Parents are commanded to train up their children, and masters to command their household to keep the way of the Lord, as we see in the Lord's testimony of Abraham. Thus we see, in the fourth command, the master of the family is obliged to see to the religious observance of the Sabbath by all within his house, and so he has a charge for which he is accountable to the great God; and therefore a sincere person looks on himself as bound to be careful to maintain the worship of God in his family, and amongst those whom he has the charge of. This made holy Job concerned to sacrifice for his children; and the neglect of paternal duty in Eli provoked the Lord's displeasure.

6. The care of persons who are sincerely religious to maintain family religion, flows from the force of their solemn engagements and vows to the Lord in their baptism, which are again renewed upon offering their children to the Lord in that ordinance. Here they are solemnly and deeply sworn to be the Lord's, and to walk with God, in and before their families, to instruct them by example and precept. And this surely cannot be performed where family-religion is not taken care of in all its parts. How terrible will it be to parents and masters of families, when their children and servants, from generation to generation, shall accuse them as faulty, and the cause of their want of family-religion? Indeed, say they, we never worshipped God in our families; why? we never saw the worship of God in our father's or master's families? How terrible will this be, when God shall say, Is it so? hast thou damned thy child, thy servant? Is this the performance of the solemn vows which thou tookest on before so many witnesses? How confounded wilt thou then look? Other things to this purpose we may have occasion to touch at afterwards. From what has been said, it is plain,

1. That all who are sincere will undoubtedly be careful to maintain family-religion.

2. Whence it is so. It is from the force of all these ties we have mentioned, and others of the like nature, we may afterwards have occasion to mention.

We shall now make some practical improvement of this point. And,

Use 1. For information. We may draw from it the few following inferences, amongst many. Is it so, that such as are sincerely religious themselves, will be conscientiously careful about family-religion? Then,

1. We have undoubtedly reason to suspect their religion who are triflers in this matter. Since a suitable concern about our own salvation, and the means leading thereto, leads to a due concern about the souls of our families, no doubt, when we see persons trifle here, it gives us ground to be jealous, that they are not under a due concern about their own souls. Now, of triflers in this sort, who seem all to fall under that heavy curse that is pronounced, Jer. xlviii. 10. against such as do the

work of the Lord negligently, there are three sorts. (1.) Such as do the work of the Lord by parts. They will, it may be, read a chapter, but never a word of praying, or of singing praises to the Lord in their families; though there is full as much ground for the one as for the other, from the command of God, and from our own necessities. The reading of the word is not like to turn to any great or good account to us, if we join not prayer for the Lord's Spirit, to cause us understand what we read. And he well understood this, who spent so great a part of that long psalm in praying for light, Psal. exix. 18. "Open mine eyes, that I may see wonders out of thy law," is a petition that should go along with reading of the word. And indeed praises ought not to be forgot, and praise will be ever looked on as comely for the upright: "It is a good thing to give thanks to the name of the Lord; and the true way it is to obtain much of him. Memorable, above many, are the words of the Psalmist to this purpose, "Let the people praise thee: O God, let all the people praise thee." There is the exhortation: well, what follows on it? The ensuing verse tells: "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our God, shall bless us," Psal. lxxvii. 5, 6. All the duties of religion, whether domestic, or public, or secret, have a mutual subserviency to one another, as well as a tendency to promote the design of all; and therefore one cannot be taken away, without a manifest injury done to the rest, and done to the very design. —Such who deal thus are undoubtedly triflers, and are to be accounted contemners of the Lord's authority; for assuredly, if it were regard to the Lord's command that made them careful of one part, the same regard and deference to the Lord's command would make them perform all the other parts. If we cut and carve, take and leave, as we see meet, in those things which are equally established by the Lord, we do the work of the Lord deceitfully; and "cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully." And, (2.) Such are to be accounted triflers as do seldom worship God in their families: it may be, on the Sabbath-night they will read or sing, or so, but no more till the next Sabbath. They who confine all their religion to the Sabbath, I dare say they never kept the Sabbath duly. No doubt, we ought to worship God in our families daily, we ought to confess our sins, cry to him for a gracious supply of all our wants, and to praise him for his mercy towards us. Surely, when we are bid "pray always with all prayer," Eph. vi. 18, this is at least to be understood that we ought to be frequently employed in this sort of prayer, as well as any other. No less can be meant also, where we are bid, 1 Thess. v. 17. "Pray without ceasing." Undoubtedly, therefore, triflers they are, who do frequently neglect, who, upon every trifling occasion, will baulk family-religion, while there is every day both a clear call to it, and fair occasion for it. The Lord's mercies are new every morning, and so are both our sins and our wants, and therefore so ought our applications to God. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises to thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night," Psal. xcii. 1, 2. (3.) Such are triflers, as notwithstanding the clear command we have to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," do yet, with a cold indifferency, and even as they were asleep, manage this work. Is this to serve the Lord with all our strength, with all our heart and soul, as we are commanded? Nay, sure it is not. Let

such take heed who thus offer to the Lord a carcase, a form, who please themselves with the mere performance of the duties, without considering how they are performed; let such, I say, look with trembling and astonishment to that word of the prophet, "Cursed be the deceiver, that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing," Mal. i. 14.

2. We may draw this inference from it, that such as do entirely neglect family-religion are undoubtedly strangers to sincerity. Think on this, ye who to this day never bowed a knee to God in your families: undoubtedly, ye are under a mistake as to your case; and, be your thoughts of yourselves what they will, God looks on you as persons void of all religion. For, (1.) Is not family-religion a duty? sure it is; all the Lord's people, in all generations, have thought so; the Lord has approved them in it. Abraham, as we have heard, was highly commended for this. It is one of the noted evidences, Job i. 5. of the piety of Job, of whom God did in a manner glory. It is plainly enjoined in the fourth command, as judicious Durham solidly clears.—But what need I say more? It is so clear, that nobody denies it who has any sense of religion; and even they who neglect it must own it a duty. Again, (2.) Is not, then, your neglect of it a sin against light, that is, a sin of deeper than ordinary dye, a blacker hue, and consequently to be more severely punished by the holy and jealous God? "He that knows his master's will, and does it not, is to be beaten with many stripes." (3.) Is it a sin you are only once guilty of in your life? Nay, but it is a sin ye are every day guilty of. (4.) And is it consistent with any thing of the reality of religion, to live in the constant and habitual neglect of any duty, or the commission of any known sin? Nay, surely it is not; for the Lord is plain with us in this matter: "He that committeth sin (that is, who lives in a course of sin), is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," I John iii. 8, 9. Vain, therefore, are all your pretences to any thing of the reality of religion, who live in the neglect of family-religion.

3. We may from this doctrine learn, whence it is that there is such a sad neglect of family-religion this day. It is from a want of sincere personal religion. Few there are who are themselves under a due concern about their own souls; and hence it is that there are so few careful about the souls of their families. Now, that this flows from a defect of personal religion, is plain beyond contradiction, if we consider, (1.) That where there is that sincerity that will not make ashamed, there undoubtedly there is to be found a regard and an equal respect to all God's commands: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commands, Psal. cxix. 6. Again, (2.) Experience shows, that they who are negligent in this matter, are also careless about their own souls. Look to it, ye who neglect family-religion; I fear ye are not careful about personal religion. He that will easily baulk and neglect family-prayer, will be as ready to neglect secret prayer. This is well known in experience. (3.) The very excuses that they make use of for this neglect, speak the want of a heart to it; for surely, when people are kept from a thing by frivolous and trifling difficulties, it is a sign they have no great mind to it.

Object. 1. Say some, We cannot pray, we never were taught to pray.

I answer, (1.) If thou meanest that thou canst not do it as thou oughtest, very true; neither canst thou do any duty: wilt thou therefore give over all? (2.) Didst thou ever try it? did ye ever sit down with your family, and make a mint at it? What knowest thou, but it might have fallen out to thee, as to the man with the withered hand? If thou hadst made a fair trial to pray, thou perhaps mightest have got strength thou didst never expect. It is want of will and inclination, not of strength and ability, that hinders. (3.) Did ye ever cry to God to teach you? Did ye ever, with the disciples, cry, Master, or Lord, teach us to pray? If not, surely it is want of will that keeps you from duty. Ye have no mind to it. (4.) Can ye do any thing? Yes, will ye say, we can work at our ordinary employments. Well, but could ye do this at first? Did ye not come to a skill in these things, after many fainter essays, and pains taken to learn? No doubt ye did. Even so ye must learn to pray. (5.) Have ye any sense of family-sins, family-mercies, or family-wants? If ye have, sure I am, what ye are sensible of, ye can speak. Can ye tell your neighbour? and may ye not also tell these things to God? But,

Object. 2. Say ye, When we come before God, we must speak well, and when we come before the great King, we must have words in good order; and now I cannot order my words aright.

Answer. (1.) It is not words that God seeks. Many a time he has rejected good words, for want of a correspondent frame of heart, Deut. v. 29.; but he never rejected a prayer, because it was not right worded. (2.) I say, If thy words express the real sentiments of thy heart, and thou be upon the matter right, God will pass by many indecencies and failings in thy words; so he did with Job: Job had many harsh expressions concerning God, both to him, and of him; and yet, because he was upon the matter right, he passes by these failings, while he reproveth his three friends: "Ye have not spoken of me the things that are right, as my servant Job," chap. xlii. 6. (3.) In prayer, we address God as a Father, and we know parents will not quarrel their children in nonage, though they lisp and speak after their own way; nor will God be worse than our parents in this respect. (4.) Utterance is God's gift, and therefore would ye have it? to the Lord ye must look for it. (5.) As far as thou understandest thy needs, or the Lord's mercies, and art affected with them, in so far ye will still find words to express your concern; and if any man teach you to speak beyond your understanding and concern, he teaches you to mock God. But, (6.) If this hold, it strikes as well against secret prayer, as family-prayer, and so we must quit all prayer.

Object. 3. But say ye, Ah! I cannot get confidence.

Answer. (1.) Will this excuse bear you out at God's hand? Dare ye make it to him? No, I am sure, ye dare not. (2.) Whether will it require greater confidence to pray before your family, or to stand at the bar of God, and before angels and men, and tell ye had never confidence to pray in your families? (3.) This is horrible pride; ye think ye cannot pray, so as to gain repute; and because ye cannot gain your end, cursed self, therefore ye rob God of his glory. (4.) Whether is it that thou canst not get confidence to pray before men, or before God? If thou sayest thou canst not get confidence to pray to God, then ye should not pray in secret either, nor yet in public. If thou sayest, it is before men

that thou art ashamed, then is not this horrible impiety, to be more influenced by a foolish regard to man, than by a regard to God? If thou hast confidence to appear before God, thou mayest easily appear before men. Place but thyself under the eye of God, and set thyself to prayer, and then all thoughts of men will quickly be gone.

Object. 4. But say some, We cannot get time.

Answ. (1.) For what has God given thee time? was it not to serve him, to save thine own soul, and the souls of thy family? (2.) Whereon spendest thou thy time? On thy business or family wilt thou answer? Well, if so, this is the compendious, shortest, and surest way to carry all forward. It is the way to get God with you, then ye will be prosperous. Finally, It is not true, for there is none of you all, but idle away, either upon no business, or worse than none, more than this would require. Now this much for the third inference.

4. We may from our doctrine draw this inference That ministers have not the only charge, or all the care and charge of the souls of the people; masters of families and parents have also a charge. And think on it, God will require at your hands the blood of your children, and of your servants, if they perish through your negligence. Now, that ye have the charge, and are answerable to God for children and servants, is past all contradiction. For, (1.) Parents and masters of families have a considerable interest with servants and children. Children and servants pay somewhat of reverence and respect unto their parents and masters, and allow them some interest in their affection. Now, all this interest with them should be improved toward their salvation, and their engagement in God's service. (2.) Not only have ye an influence upon them this way, but ye have a power of commanding them; and this should be improved likewise toward their engagement in the Lord's way. (3.) Ye have frequent opportunities of conversing with them, and ye are accountable for the improvement of these towards their good; God expressly requiring your care as to the improvement of these, Deut. vi. 6, 7. Finally, (4.) Parents have a charge directly given to them; it is enjoined, "that they train up their children in the way of the Lord;" and to them it is that the Lord enjoins the forming of the tender years of their posterity. God has placed his testimonies amongst us; and we are all, according to our respective stations and opportunities, obliged to propagate both the knowledge and the practice of them: "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children," Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6.

Use 2. Of lamentation. This doctrine may be improved for lamentation. Is it so, that such as are themselves sincerely religious, will be conscientiously careful to maintain family-religion? Then surely we have reason to lament the woeful neglect of this duty, and of a due regard unto it in the day wherein we live. That this is either entirely neglected, or lamentably trifled over by the generality of parents and masters of families in our days, is, alas! too, too evident. For, (1.) Their horrid and abounding ignorance of God speaks it out. Were parents conscientiously careful to train up their children from their tender years, in the knowledge of God, as they are commanded: were they

speaking to them of the things of God, when they sit in their houses, when they walk in the fields, when they lie down and rise up; and were these beginnings cultivated by masters of families, when they get them home to be servants, surely there would not be so much ignorance of God this day in the land as there is. Again, (2.) The abounding impiety that there is in the land, speaks few Abrahams to be in it, who will command their children and their servants to walk in the ways of the Lord. Magistrates are no doubt faulty, and ministers too; but the rise of all is, the negligence of parents and masters of families; and at their hand will the Lord require it. (3.) The impiety of young ones, in particular, speaks this aloud. O how sadly doth it speak the wickedness of parents, when their children do lisp out oaths as soon as they begin to speak, when children talk obscenely as soon as they begin to converse; it tells us, their parents have not done, and do not their part. Finally, It is what cannot be denied, it is what ye must confess, because there are too many witnesses of its truth, even as many children, as many servants, as many sojourners, as there are in many of your families, as many witnesses there are against most of you, that ye either perfectly trifle in this, or totally neglect family-religion.

Now, surely we have reason heavily to lament this, and to mourn over it. For,

1. It gives us a sad character of the present generation. It tells us what sort of persons most part of parents and masters of families are in the day wherein we live, even that they are destitute of any thing of real and sincere respect unto the Lord and his service; and though they be called Christians, yet really they know not Christ; nor are they careful to honour him, or engage others to do it; nay more, that they are horribly perjured, because solemnly sworn to instruct by precept and example, and even to train up their children and families in acquaintance with the Lord; and yet they make no conscience of performing what they have vowed to the Lord, the most high God.

2. We have reason to lament this, because it gives us a sad prospect of the rising generation. Who shall form the rising generation? Who shall train them up in the knowledge of the Lord, and engage them to the way of the Lord? It may be ye will say, Let ministers do it. But, ah! if others do not their part, all that ministers can do will not prevail. Ministers are little with them; ministers have many to attend. Ministers are called to preach the word, to attend to the exercise of discipline, and this takes much of their work and time. But parents and masters of families, they have few only to look to, they are much with them, have more interest with them, and more access to notice them; and if they improve not these advantages, the rising generation is not like to transmit to their posterity a good account of religion. This generation is sensibly worse than the former; and we may expect the next to be worse; and God knows where this neglect is like to land us ere long, even in downright atheism.

3. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, because of the dreadful and heavy doom it is like to bring on us altogether. Eli's neglect cost him and his family dear. What sad things this may in time bring upon parents and children, families, congregations, and nations, God only knows. But sure I am, it will make the day of judgment a terrible day to many of them, when children and servants shall go, as it

were, in shoals to the pit, cursing their parents and their masters, who brought them there. And parents and masters of families shall be in multitudes plunged headlong in endless destruction, because they have not only murdered their own souls, but also imbrued their hands in the blood of their children and servants. O how doleful will the reckoning be amongst them at that day! when the children and servants shall upbraid their parents and masters: "Now, now, we must to the pit, and we have you to blame for it; your cursed example and lamentable negligence have brought us to the pit. We never saw you worship God yourselves, and ye never worshipped God in your families. Ye did not instruct us in the way of the Lord, nor train us up to it, and now we are indeed ruined and damned for our sins; but our blood lies at your doors, who might have done much to have saved us, but did it not." And, on the other hand, how will the shrieks of parents fill every ear! "I have damned myself, I have damned my children, I have damned my servants. While I fed their bodies, and clothed their backs, I have ruined their souls, and brought double damnation on myself." O let us mourn over this sad evil, that will undoubtedly have this dismal and terrible issue. What can affect your hearts, if this do not?

4. Let us lament what none can seriously look upon and not lament, even a perishing generation, a ruined and destroyed multitude, and that not without the most terrible aggravations of their misery. (1.) Is it not lamentable to see children and servants fettered in chains of darkness, and reserved in them to judgment? to see them driven, as it were, to damnation and death eternal? (2.) Is it not yet more dreadful to see them destroyed by those who are under the strongest ties to endeavour their relief? (3.) Is it not sad to see them, who pretend love to their children, and servants, hugging a bit of clay, their bodies I mean, while they are damning their immortal souls? Surely this is to be lamented; and that it is not more noticed and bewailed, will ere long occasion a bitter lamentation. But we proceed next to

Use 3. Of reproof; and that 1. To such as trifle in this duty. 2. To such as half family-religion. 3. To such as totally neglect it. 4. To such as, instead of family-religion, do live in family-wickedness.

1. Then, we say, this reaches a reproof to such as do trifle in family-religion: some there are who make the fashion, at least of attending all the duties of it; but with such faintness, deadness, and coldrifeness, as say their duty is their burden, and not their choice. They can scarce tell what advantage they make of it. Such our doctrine reproveth, and faulty ye are. For,

(1.) This says personal religion is either altogether wanting, or under a sad decay. Personal and family religion go together; as there is an increase in zeal, and carefulness about the one, so there will be about the other. When David looked well to himself, when he behaved himself wisely in a perfect way, he then also walked within his house with a perfect heart, Psal. ci. 2. Surely your trifling in family-religion is the genuine fruit of trifling in private and personal religion.

(2.) Ye deprive yourselves of the comfort of family-religion. The Lord has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain;" nay, he is good to the soul that seeks him, to them that wait for him. "In keeping his commands there is great reward;" but they who trifle, miss

this great reward; for he only "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6.

(3.) Ye miss the mark, ye do not reach the scope and intendment of these duties, the engagement of your families to the Lord. It will not be a coldrife and formal performance of duty, that will either please God, or profit yourselves, or gain others.

(4.) Faulty ye are to a high degree; ye provoke the Lord to anger. God is a Spirit, and he requires those who worship him, to do it in spirit and in truth. We must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. He spues the inkewarm out of his mouth, and has pronounced a curse against those who serve him with the worst: "Cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth a corrupt thing," Mal. i. 14.

2. This doctrine teaches a reproof to such as half family-religion. Some there are who will not entirely omit, nor yet will they entirely perform. They go a part of the way with God, but they will not go the whole. To such we say,

(1) Ye disjoin what the Lord has joined. The whole law of the Lord is knit together; and all parts of it are subservient to each other: and it is remarkably so with respect to family-religion: and particularly with respect to family-worship. Prayer obtains from the Lord influences of light, whereby we are made to understand his word: and discoveries of the Lord in the word fill our mouths with the high praises of the Lord. Let no man, therefore, separate these which the Lord has joined.

(2.) Ye betray naughtiness of heart. A sincere heart counts God's commands all of them to be right concerning all things. They who have not a respect to all the Lord's commands, shall, when they are tried, be exposed to just shame and contempt, Psal. cxi. 6. Now, while ye thus pick out some, and reject others, ye practically declare how naughty your heart is.

(3.) Ye trample upon the authority of the Lord in the command: "He that breaks one is guilty of all." If the Lord's authority were the motive that induced you to do the one part of this duty, it would also prevail with you to do the other. If the true reason why ye read a chapter sometimes in your family, were because the Lord commands it, ye would, for the very same reason, pray in your families. It is not the authority of the Lord that sticks with you, otherwise it would be in all respects of the like and equal consideration and weight with you. This is not that which prevails with you, and therefore ye are guilty of the signal contempt of the Lord.

(4.) Ye lose even what ye do. God will have all or none. Ye must either receive or reject all his laws. He will allow no man to pick and choose; and since ye are not clear for all, ye will be no better of all the lengths ye go. Instead, therefore, of a reward for what ye have done, ye may expect to be sent to the pit for what has been left undone.

3. This doctrine teaches a sad and sharp reproof to the total neglecters of family-religion. And even of this sort there are not a few. Some there are hearing, it may be, who have lived, some ten, some twenty years and upwards in a family, and never a word all the while of any thing like a family-religion. To such we say,

(1.) Ye are going in the clear way to destruction. Ye heard us

prove, from the most solid scripture evidence, that where there is heart-sincerity, any thing of real personal godliness, there will be also a conscientious care to maintain the worship of God, and all the parts of family-religion.

(2.) As if that were not enough, ye do what in you lies to ruin the souls of your children and families. He as really is guilty of the murder of his son or servant, who neglects his instruction, as he is who stabs a dagger to his heart.

(3.) What in you lies ye do to frustrate the gospel, and make ministers lose their pains. Then is the gospel like to be successful towards the salvation of souls, when every one doth his part: but ye are so far from furthering the gospel, that ye join issue with the god of this world, in blindfolding the children of men, lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine into their minds.

(4.) Ye sin against the Lord with a high hand: ye say upon the matter, that he shall not dwell in your house, when ye refuse to invite him in, and to urge his stay.

4. To those this doctrine reaches a rebuke, who not only neglect family-religion, but who, I might say, maintain family-irreligion, and instruct their families to neglect the Lord and his service.

(1.) By the neglect of family-worship, children and servants who never see any thing like the worship of God in the families wherein they live, and who are not instructed in the way of the Lord, are thereby laid open to the conduct of their own hearts, and taught also to neglect it.

(2.) By example of many parents, children and servants are taught to go a greater length: not only see the worship of God neglected, family-religion trifled over and slighted, but they see their parents and masters living careless of personal religion, neglecting secret prayer, reading of the word; nay more, living in the practice of known sin, drinking, swearing, speaking profanely. Here is the example, and readily it is followed by corrupt nature. Children and servants are ready to write after this copy: "As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil," Jer. xlv. 16, 17.

(3.) Children are not only by many parents drawn on to sin, but by some even cherished in it—while they laugh at, and excuse, and sometimes tempt their children to iniquity.

4. Children are misled by parents not correcting them, and that severely for sin: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it away;" and therefore "he that spares the rod hates the child." Eli stands a monument of the terrible consequences of indulging children in ill.

These and such ways do many in our day teach both children and servants irreligion. Now, to such we say,

(1.) Is it not enough that ye yourselves join issue with Satan, but will ye thus draw others into the confederacy? Ye are not only against the Lord, but ye are ringleaders in the way to destruction.

(2.) Not content to draw others, ye drive your children and servants

to sin: and is it not enough to destroy your own souls, unless ye openly and evidently murder your families?

(3.) Is it not enough that ye banish God your house, but will ye banish him the world? This is the plain tendency of what ye do. Ye are as they who poison a fountain. By poisoning your children and servants, ye poison, it may be, those who are to be the heads of many families, and thereby spread, or at least contribute your utmost, toward the spreading destruction through the world, and that to all succeeding generations.

Finally, That I may shut up this use of reproof, we shall put all the four sorts of persons we have named together, and we have a fourfold heavy charge against them.

1. We say, ye are guilty of horrid cruelty. He that doth not what in him lies for preventing sin in his neighbour, hates him, in God's account, in his heart: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. And he that hates his brother in the least degree, is by our Lord accounted a murderer, and adjudged to punishment, Matth. v. 21. Now, according to this law, and righteous it is, ye are guilty of dreadful cruelty, not against an enemy, but against your friends: not against your neighbour, but your own children; not against their bodies, but their souls. To neglect a due care of them, is to murder their souls; and verily ye have the blood of their souls on you.

2. Ye are guilty of the most horrid perjury. How oft have some of you sworn, with hands lifted up to the most high God, before many witnesses, to serve the Lord, to worship him? Every child ye have baptized, ye solemnly vowed to serve the Lord, and to cause your houses to do so. But all the vows of God cannot tie you. Well, the time hastens on apace, when the breach of solemn vows of this nature will fall heavy upon you, and the Lord will avenge the quarrel of his covenant. And surely this will end in your utter destruction.

3. Ye are guilty of denying the faith, and are indeed worse than infidels, "But if any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8. Now, sure, if he who neglects the care of his house in temporals be guilty of this, much more he who is guilty this way in spirituals.

4. Ye are guilty of an horrid rejection of the Lord and his yoke, in that, (1.) Ye will not stoop to his authority in all his commands. (2.) In that ye openly contemn his authority, before children, and servants, and sojourners. And, (3.) Ye induce others to do the like, and, at least by your example, do encourage others to contemn the Lord; and that such as are most likely to be swayed by it, and even such as you are especially bound to train up in the Lord's service.

Now, surely when these four are taken together, as they are ground of a just reproof; so they will, if repentance prevent not, be a just ground for a terrible sentence in the great day; and therefore consider of it in time, and betake yourselves to the Lord by the exercise of repentance. But this I leave.

Use 4. Of exhortation. It now only remains, that we improve this truth in a way of exhortation. Is it so, that such as are themselves sincerely religious will be conscientiously careful to maintain family-re-

ligion? Then surely all, as they would not be thought either irreligious, or unsound in religion, or obliged to maintain family-religion.

Masters of families, I shall here address you in a matter of the highest concernment to your souls, and those of your family: Set up family-religion: make conscience of it in all its parts; and be in earnest in this matter, we beseech and obtest you. For,

1st, The Lord commands you to do so. The authority of God, enjoining it in all its parts, will be motive enough to any who have subjected themselves unto the Lord, taken his yoke upon them, and surrendered themselves to his conduct. I need not stand to mention particular testimonies for proof of this, having already done it in the doctrinal part of this discourse: I shall only add that one exhortation of Moses, the man of God, to the people of Israel, "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons," Deut. iv. 9.

2dly, For your upstirring to this duty consider, that, as the whole of religion is a reasonable service, so this in particular is highly so. The Lord demands nothing that can be denied; and to disobey him is the most unreasonable wickedness, and the height of injustice.

1. Surely there is nothing more reasonable than family-instruction. Dost thou think it reasonable to feed and clothe thy children and servants, and is it not fully as much reasonable that thou shouldest instruct them in the things that belong to their everlasting peace? Sure it is. But to clear this yet a little farther, take only these few particulars into consideration.

(1.) Your children are all born ignorant, like the wild ass's colt, Job xi. 12. Children, as when born they know not the ways and means of maintaining themselves in natural life, so they are ignorant of all that concerns their spiritual life. Nor can they understand how to live, without they be taught, far less how to provide for the life of their souls.

(2.) As they have not knowledge, so this their want of it must be ruining to them, if not made up by seasonable instruction; that the soul be without knowledge is not good. A man cannot be without the knowledge of what concerns the present life, without considerable prejudice, far less without the knowledge of those things that concern the life of his soul: "The Lord comes in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 8.

(3.) Some one or other, therefore, must instruct your families in the knowledge of God, else they perish eternally. Knowledge of these things is absolutely necessary, and how can they get this, unless some body teach them? Nay, I may say, not only is instruction requisite, but a considerable care and diligence is necessary. Religion and the truths that concern it, are not all to be learned at one lesson. Nay, but it will require frequent instructions: precept must be upon precept, line upon line, and here a little and there a little. There must be a speaking of the things of God, when we go out and when we come in, when we sit down and when we rise up, as it is enjoined, Deut. iv. 6, &c. if we would have them to stick. So dull is man, that he is not taught the easiest arts or sciences without great pains, much less is it then to be

expected, that he should learn supernatural and divine truth, without much care about his instruction.

(4.) As children want naturally the knowledge of God, which yet they must have or perish, and which they cannot obtain without they be instructed; so none are in such case, and so much concerned to instruct them, as parents. For, [1.] None are so nearly related to them as parents are. Man, woman, what is thy child but a piece of thyself? And who so much concerned to have every thing that is needful provided for thee, as thou thyself art and ought to be? [2.] None have such a fair opportunity as thou hast; for it is but little others can be with them, but thou art with them when they lie down and rise up, go out and come in, and so hast the most proper opportunities for this end. [3.] None else has such access to know the temper of children and servants; and this goes a great way in the instruction of children and others. They who know their tempers and capacities are in best case to deal with them. [4.] None are like to prevail so far with them, because none has such an interest in their affections. The more we love the master, the better will his lesson be learned. [5.] None are like to be so much the better for it, if thy children and servants be instructed in the way of the Lord, as thou. To whom will the profit, to whom will the comfort come? Surely to thee: "A wise son maketh a glad father," Prov. x. 1. [6.] None are so much concerned, because none are like so to smart by it, if thy children or servants miscarry: "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother," Prov. x. 1. And frequently, a son that causeth shame is the name given to such. Now, to whom doth he cause shame and sorrow? is it not to his parents? surely it is: "For he that begetteth a fool doth it to his sorrow," Prov. xvii. 21. Many other considerations I might add, to show none so much concerned, nor so much obliged as parents and masters of families, in regard of the dependence of children and servants upon them, and in regard of the access they have to deal with children before they are prepossessed with prejudices. But I proceed.

2. Nor is family-worship less reasonable than family-instruction. For,

(1.) There is in every family, and I may say every day, a visible ground for it in all its parts. Every family is daily loaded with new mercies that are common to all the family, and redound to the advantage of the whole; surely, then, it is but reasonable that there should be an acknowledgment of the Lord as the Author of those mercies: and his goodness should be celebrated in songs of praise. Every day family-sins are committed; and therefore need there is of pardon, of confession, of repentance. Family-wants call still for family supplications; and the snares, dangers, and darkness of the way, require a daily attendance to the word, as the unerring guide of your way.

(2.) As there is daily reason for all the parts of it, so there is a reason for a joint and public performance of all those duties. [1.] All the family are witnesses of the Lord's goodness in his bestowing mercies, of his justice in inflicting strokes, of their own sins, and wants, and darkness; and therefore we ought publicly, and together, to acknowledge God's goodness and justice, and our faith in his mercy and bounty; since the family are witnesses of the one, they ought to be so of the other also. [2.] Since, in your family capacity, ye do rejoice for one another and

sorrow with one another; since, I say, ye should bear a part with each other, both in prayer and praises, there ought to be a public testimony of this, and ye ought to join together for this end.

(3.) Masters of families should undoubtedly acquaint all in their family with the God of their fathers; and no way so effectual for this end, as to bring them all and frequently to the Lord in the duties of his own appointment, in which his power and glory are to be seen.

(4.) All who have families should, before the world, own themselves every way dependent on the Lord, and acknowledge him in all their ways. And this is the true way to answer their duty in this matter.

3. There is full as good reason for family-government as for any of the rest. For,

(1.) To glorify God, and to enjoy him, is the chief end of man, and that which he ought to aim at: as in all other things that he doth, so particularly in entering into family-society. Our families surely, and all our concerns, should be so ordered, as to contribute some way toward the furtherance of our eternal advantage.

(2.) This end can never be obtained, unless all in the family be tied to walk according to that rule which the Lord has given us, as the way toward the enjoyment of himself.

(3.) Any in the family who walk not according to the Lord's will in this matter, they do counteract that which all the family should design; and therefore, if they will persist in that course, they ought to be expelled the family. All should be obliged to look to the advantage of the family; and such as will not do so, should be turned out of it. And surely every sin allowed has a visible tendency to bring down ruin on the family. Now this much for the second motive.

3dly, As the Lord's command, and the reasonableness of the thing, should have weight, so I would have you consider next, that this is a path the Lord's people have in all generations trode. If thou expect to have their end, thou must walk in their way, and go by the footsteps of the flock; and surely they will all lead you to a careful attendance upon the Lord in the whole of this duty. To which of the saints will ye turn, if ye mean to countenance yourself in a neglect of this? Sre none of them. You will find godly Abraham, we have frequently cited; Jacob and Joshua, Job and David, we have already mentioned also; and they are followed by the saints in all generations.

4thly, Consider, that a due care for the maintenance of family-religion is necessary. For evincing your sincerity, would ye be satisfied that the world look on you as either void of all religion, or not sound in it? And what peace do ye, can you promise yourselves, while conscience has this to throw in your teeth, that ye live either in the neglect or superficial performance of a known duty? How can ye satisfy any other, or yourselves, that ye have any regard at all to that sum of the second table of the law, that requires you to love your neighbour as yourself? I say, who will believe that the man will love his neighbour as himself, who loves not his child, his servant? And who will or can justly believe, that thou lovest child or servant, while thou takest no care of their souls? It is impossible that thou canst satisfy either others or yourselves, that ye are in earnest about religion, while ye fail here.

5thly, For thy further excitement, know, that the vows of God are upon you to this matter. Ye are solemnly sworn, not only when ye

yourselves were offered to the Lord, but when ye offered your children ; and when ye were married also, then ye entered the relation, and then ye engaged to do all the duties that it doth draw after it. Now, can ye bear the reproach of perjury, of breach of solemn vows to the Lord ? Now, here there is a signal defect ; and here I would put a question to you all who have thus engaged to a performance of all duties. When ye did vow, were ye really resolved to do what ye promised ? If not, ye have mocked God after the boldest manner. If ye were, then what has altered your resolution ? Mind, God has no pleasure in fools ; and the man who shall ascend to the hill of God, is he that sweareth and changeth not.

6thly, Consider the great advantages which attend conscientious diligence in performing this duty, and that to yourselves, your children, your servants, and the public.

1. I say, Ye shall be gainers. Every part of religion has its own reward : " Godliness is profitable for all things ;" and every piece of it is profitable for some valuable end and purpose. Now, this remarkable part of religion is profitable for thyself many ways. For, (1.) In all the duties of family-religion, thou mayest have communion with the Lord, " who said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." He never bids the people set about any duty, but that wherein he was to be enjoyed. And there are this day on God's earth some who can say, as in the sight of God, that some of the sweetest opportunities they ever had on earth, were family-occasions ; and that never did they more remarkably enjoy the Lord's presence, than in family-worship. Some of considerable quality we have known go into eternity, blessing God for family-religion, and others will do so. (2.) It is the way for thee to win souls ; and this is of great advantage to thee : " He that winneth souls is wise ; and they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever." And surely, if thou win a soul of a son or servant, thou shalt have the advantage and comfort of it doubly. To have contributed towards the salvation of any, gives much pleasure ; much more to have done so toward the advantage of a child or servant. Again, (3.) If thou art successful, and dost gain them, surely it redounds to thy advantage ; for it will conciliate and engage their affection much to thee, lay a powerful enforcement to obedience on them, and engage them to improve their interest at the throne of grace on your behalf, and procure a blessing from the Lord to thy family. (4.) If they be not engaged, yet thy respect to God, in witnessing for him, and cleaving to him, when tempted by so strong a discouragement as the universal backwardness of thy family is, shall not go without a reward. (5.) Surely, since the Lord, we find, would bless a family for the sake of a religious servant, as we find the Lord blessed Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake, Gen. xxxix. 5. and Laban's house for Jacob's sake, he will no less, if not more, bless a house on account of a religious master of a family. (6.) It is the true way to obtain honour and respect from the Lord, and even intimacy with him. This put Abraham on God's secrets, Gen. xviii. 18. When God was to do a great work of justice, he would not conceal it from Abraham, because he was one that would, he knew, make conscience in particular of this duty. Finally, the true method to make dutiful children and servants, is to engage them to God's way. If once

they come to have a due regard for the Lord, they will learn soon to pay a due respect to parents and masters.

2. This family-religion will be no less profitable to thy children; and, ye know, their gain should be accounted gain by you. Every parent should be of John's mind, third epistle, ver. 4. "I have no greater joy, than to bear that my children walk in the truth;" and that particularly because it contributes to their advantage, and that many ways. (1.) It is God's way, the means of his appointment toward their engagement in the Lord's way: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. The way to engage them to the Lord, is to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," Eph. vi. 4. And what can be so much to their advantage as peace and acquaintance with God, whereby good shall come to them, in time, and to eternity? (2.) If this be not reached, yet it is a way that will not readily fail of keeping them from running to the same excess of riot with others, whereby they make themselves a disgrace to their parents, and all concerned in them. It would be a check to them, whereby they might be kept from adventuring upon those bold heights that some run to. I remember, the noble Lord Russel, son to the Marquis of Bedford, in his speech on the scaffold, July 21, 1683, blesses God for religious education: "For (says he) even when I minded it least, it still hung about me, and gave me checks; and hath now for many years so influenced and possessed me, that I feel the happy effects of it in this my extremity." (3.) Though the advantage may never be seen by you, yet it may lay a foundation for their happiness, when far from you. Good education may be like seeds in the ground, which may lie dead till a shower come, and then it will bud and bring forth fruit. It may be, when thy eyes are shut, and thy children in some far country, God may trust them with some awakening providence, that may put life in the seed thou hast sown. It is the unhappiness of many in this day, that they are not acquaint with the first principles of religion; and therefore, when evil befalls them afar off, or among persons ignorant of God, whither their wickedness drives them, then there is nothing in them to work upon. Providences that are the most rousing, are like showers falling upon earth, without seed in it, that surely will have no product.

3. We have likewise an inducement to this, from its advantage to servants. Servants are called children in scripture: Naaman's servants call him father, 2 Kings v. 13.; and no doubt a fatherly care there should be of servants. They are undoubtedly at least to come in amongst the first rank of neighbours, whom ye should love as yourself. Now, they have a double advantage. (1.) It is the way to bring them to saving acquaintance with the Lord: "Abraham will command his house after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 11. (2.) It is the way to make them useful as a servant to thee; and what he doth this way is both his advantage and thine. (3.) When he comes to be a master, it is like to engage him to the same course; and this will be not only his, but his posterity's advantage.

4. The advantage of this to the public, both church and state, should invite you. For consider, (1.) Hereby you train up persons fit to serve God and their country faithfully, in public employments, either in church or state. (2.) Hereby ye propose a good example to engage others to those ways that are for the good and honour of the state. They that are

good Christians will ever be good subjects. (3.) Thou contributest a notable part toward the maintenance both of church and state, inasmuch as thou endeavourest, as far as thy power reaches, to keep the subjects of either of them up in their fear of God, and their duty toward both church and commonwealth.

7thly, On the other hand, consider the sad and lamentable consequences of a neglect in this matter, with respect to your children and servants, yourself and the public.

1. I say, Consider the sad disadvantages with respect unto the children themselves. They are left, (1.) Destitute of that which is most profitable and useful for them in time, and after time; for "godliness is profitable for all things, having the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (2.) They are exposed, as it were, to wild beasts. If you will not educate them in the way of the Lord, the devil and their own corruptions will educate them in the way to hell; if ye will not teach them to pray, the devil will teach them to swear. A young man, void of understanding, is a prey to every destroying lust. See Prov. vii. 6, 7, &c. (3.) Not only so, but hereby they are, as it were, hedged and fenced against both ordinances and providences, through their ignorance of God, and the principles of religion; they can be bettered by neither of them.

2. It is sadly disadvantageous with respect unto the public; for, (1.) The public loses the use and advantage which either church or state might have had by them, if they had been duly educate. Again, (2.) Instead of being helpful, they are hurtful. (3.) Not only hurtful, but even destructive and ruining; for to corrupt a family, is in effect to corrupt a nation; because a family quickly spreads itself, and is like to carry this plague along with it.

3. It is sadly disadvantageous to you: for, (1.) It is not like that your children shall prove, as they otherwise might, the stay and comfort of your old age; it is not probable, that they who have not been dutifully used by you, shall use you dutifully. Lycurgus made a law, that children who were not well educate should not provide for their parents when old. (2.) They are like to procure the sorrow, inasmuch as they are like to run to evil, and fall into mischief; which will be so much the heavier to thee, because thou art faulty in it. The Switzers have a law, that when children are guilty of any capital offence, parents are to be the executioners, to teach that they are to blame in this matter. (3.) They are like, not only to perish, but to sink you with them. They will be as so many mill-stones tied about your neck, to make you sink the deeper under the wrath of God: and your misery will for ever be increased, by the accession you have had to theirs.

Now, for your help in this duty, I shall conclude with two or three advices.

1. Would ye deal to any purpose in this matter? then be sure that ye be personally religious.

2. Begin early to be so: put off no time, but set about the study of it now.

3. Study much the worth of souls, the worth of children and servants' souls.

4. Learn well the meaning of that command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Finally, Study to be lively in religion, and then ye will go on without constraint.

Now, upon the whole consider: “ And if it seem evil to you this day to serve the Lord, choose ye whom ye will serve;” but through grace, the advice I give, I resolve to follow: “ But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

NATURAL RELIGION INSUFFICIENT,

AND

REVEALED NECESSARY

TO MAN'S HAPPINESS IN HIS PRESENT STATE.

A Scornor seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth, Prov. xiv. 6.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John vii. 17.

Solis nosse Deos et Cœli Numina vobis,
Aut solis nescire, datum.

Lucan, de Druid

AN EPISTLE
OF
RECOMMENDATION.

MANY learned and zealous asserters of the truth of revealed religion have worthily employed their time and talents in defence of Christianity, against the cavilling assaults of the bold infidels of the present age. The pious and worthy author of this treatise against Deism thought meet to alter the usual method of management by carrying an offensive war into the enemy's territories; and hath successfully attacked the strongest forts of the Deists' principles by showing their utter insufficiency to guide us unto eternal happiness. Hereunto is added a treatise of the reason of faith, for establishing the belief of revealed religion upon its true and proper basis. We therefore, wishing and hoping, that these posthumous labours of the reverend author may, through the blessing of God, prove useful and profitable for promoting and confirming the serious and unbiassed reader in the true Christian faith, do earnestly recommend to him the diligent perusal of them, and him in using of them, to the grace of God for that effect.

WILLIAM CARSTARES.
JAMES HADOW.
WILLIAM HAMILTON.
WILLIAM WISHEART.
THOMAS BLACK.
JAMES GRIERSON.
JOHN FLEMING.

P R E F A C E.

THE God of glory hath not left himself without a witness ; all his works do. after their manner, declare his glory. “ Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee ; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee ; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this ?” Job. xii. 7, 8, 9. Moreover, it hath pleased him to instamp upon the consciences of men, such deep impressions of his being and glory, that all the powers and subtilty of hell shall never be able to efface them : though, alas ! through a custom of sin, and especially against much light and conviction, the consciences of many are debauched in these dregs of time to an obliterating of these impressions, which otherwise would have been strong and vivid. The principles of moral equity carry such an evidence in their nature, and are also accompanied with so much of binding force upon the conscience, that their obligation on rational creatures has a most resplendent clearness, and fills the little word with such a strength and efficacy of truth as far surpass the plainest theoretical principles. To pass others, that one maxim, “ Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” Matth. vii. 12. Luke vi. 3. was matter of so much wonder to some of the most polite heathens, as they knew not well how to express their sense of the truth and glory of it, that they thought it worthy to be engraven with letters of gold, upon the frontispieces of their most magnificent structures ; an agreeable and speaking evidence of its having been imprinted in some measure upon their hearts. Nevertheless, all these, though sweet, strong, and convincing notices of a deity, do yet vanish as faint glimmerings, when compared to that stamp of divine authority, which our great and alone lawgiver has deeply imprinted upon the scriptures of truth, Psal. xix. 7. “ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple,” &c. I enter not upon this large theme, which great men have treated to excellent purpose ; I only represent very shortly, that the stupendous account we have in these scriptures of moral equity in its full compass, comprised even in ten words, proclaimeth its author with so much of convincing evidence, and such strains of glory, as I cannot possibly clothe with words. The greatest men among the heathen nations have given the highest accounts of their accomplishments by framing of laws ; but besides the passing weakness of their performances, when viewed in a true light, the choicest of them all have a great deal of iniquity inlaid with them : but all here shineth with the glory of a deity. Every duty is plainly contained within these small boundaries, and all concerns thereof, in heart and way, are set down so punctually, and so fully cleared in the exposition which the lawgiver himself has given of his own laws, that nothing is wanting. Here also are all the mysteries of iniquity in the heart so clearly and fully detected, these evils

also pursued to their most latent sources, and the grand spring of them all, namely—the corruption of our nature, and in so very few words, with so much of shining evidence and power, that no judicious and sober person can deny that the finger of God is there, unless he offers the most daring violence to his own conscience. And what shall I say of the glorious contrivance of salvation, through the Lord Jesus our only Redeemer? Should I touch at the ground-work thereof in the eternal counsel of the adorable Trinity, and the several displays of it, until at length the complete purchase was made in the fulness of time, and if I should but glance at the several strokes of omnipotent power, and rich mercy through Christ, by which they purchased salvation, is effectually applied to every elect person, I would enter upon a field from which I could not quickly or easily get off. All that I adventure to say, is, the discoveries of a deity in each step thereof are so resplendent and full of glory, that the existence of light under a meridian sun, without the interposition of a cloud, may as well be denied, as these great truths can be disowned. Beyond all manner of doubt, they contain matter of much higher, and more glorious evidence upon the minds of all those whose eyes the god of this world hath not blinded, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. John i. 5. Deut. xxix. 4. Yet, ah! midday clearness is midnight darkness to these who have not eyes. But not to insist; if we add to all these the full-history of the heart of man in all the depths of wickedness contained in that great abyss, together with the several eruptions thereof, both open and violent, as also subtile and covered, together with all the engines of temptations for setting it to work, and keeping it still busy—If, I say, the perfect account of these things which is given in the word be seriously pondered, who can escape the conviction, that He, and he only, who formed the spirit of man within him, could have given such a display. From all this I would bewail, were it possible, with tears of blood, the blasphemous wickedness of those who, from the grossest darkness and ignorance, oppose, malign, and deride such great and high things. But it is enough, “wisdom is justified of her children,” Matth. xi. 19. The worthy and now glorified author of this work had a plentiful measure, beyond many, of the surest and sweetest knowledge of these matters. His soul, may I so express it, was cast into the blessed mould of gospel truth. Who is a teacher like unto God! Sure an enlightening work by his word and Spirit upon the soul filleth it with evidence of a more excellent nature, and attended with a penetrancy quite of another kind, than any mathematical demonstration can amount to. In this case, the soul is an epistle of Jesus Christ, wherein these great truths are written by himself in characters which the united force and subtilties of hell shall be so far from effacing, that their strongest efforts shall render the impression still deeper and more vivid. No demonstration can vie with this, inasmuch as the authority of the God of truth, that conveys his own testimony into the heart, with a strong hand, has a glory and evidence peculiar to itself; and though well known to those who enjoy it, yet of a beauty great and mysterious, such as the tongues of men and angels could not suffice to describe. The empty cavils of that execrable herd of blasphemous Atheists, or Deists, as they would be called, amount to a very small and contemptible account, seeing the most subtile of them fall very far short of these objections; unclean spirits propose and urge in a way of temptation against persons exercised to godliness,

which yet the Father of Lights dispelleth mercifully from time to time, and maketh these dark shades to evanish, as the sun of righteousness ariseth upon the soul, with a glory and evidence still upon the ascendant, Mal. iv. 2. Prov. iv. 18. Hos. vi. 3. Nevertheless, the learned and godly author hath encountered these silly creatures at their own weapons, both offensively and defensively, and to such excellent purpose as needeth not my poor testimony. He hath searched into the very bottom of what they allege, with great and unwearied diligence: he did read their writings carefully from the very first springs, and hath represented fairly their empty evils, in all the shadows of strength they can be alleged to have, and has refuted them plainly and copiously. On which, and the like accounts, I hope the work shall be, through the divine blessing, of great use in the churches of Christ.

JAMES HOG.

TO THE READER.

READER, whoever thou art, the question agitated in the ensuing treatise is that wherein thou hast a considerable interest. If thou art a Christian, the treatise is designed to justify the refusal of that religion which has now got a great vogue amongst those gentlemen, who set up for the only wits, and aim at monopolizing reason, as if they alone were the people, and wisdom was to die with them. They cry up their religion as the only reasonable religion, and traduce all who will not join with them, as credulous and unreasonable men. Whereas, on the contrary, no man that uses his reason can close with that which they would obtrude on us as rational religion: nor can any man, without being guilty of the greatest credulity, venture his salvation upon this modern paganism that struts abroad under the modish name of Deism, which, I hope, the ensuing discourse will evince, wherein it is made appear, that the light of nature is utterly insufficient to answer the great ends of religion, and that, consequently, had there been no revelation, we had the justest reason in the world to wish for one from God, as what is of absolute necessity to our happiness; and since there is one, with the greatest thankfulness to embrace it, cleave to it, and comply with it.

If, reader, thou hast thy religion yet to choose, which I am afraid is too common a case, in this unstable age, then it is high time thou wert bethinking thyself of religion in earnest.

“To-morrow thou wilt live, thou still dost say,
To-day's too late, the wise lived yesterday.”

And if after too long a delay thou meanest to avoid an unhappy choice, reason advises thee to consider well, that when the choice is made, care be taken to make it, so as to prevent the necessity either of a second choice, or a too late repentance for choosing amiss. There is a set of men, who cry up at this day natural religion; and especially commend it to such as have no religion. It is such as thou art they desire to deal with, and among such it is they are most successful. But if thou hast a mind not to be deceived in a matter of such moment, it imports thee not a little to consider what may be said against that, which, it is like, may be offered thee, as a fine, modish, reasonable religion, meet for a gentleman, a man of wit and reason. I have here offered to prove all this to be said without, yea against reason and experience. Well, first hear, and then judge, and after choose or refuse as thou seest cause.

As for the management of this useful inquiry, it is wholly suited to that which at first was only designed, namely, the satisfaction of the writer's own mind about the question that is here proposed. I entered not upon this inquiry with an eye to oppose any man, or triumph over adversaries, and so did industriously wave those catches, subtilties, and other niceties used frequently by writers of controversy. My only design was to find the truth, and therefore I chose clearly to state the

question, which I found the deists always avoided, and plainly propose my reasons for that side of it I took, after trial, to be the truth. As to the opposite opinion, I made it my business to make a diligent inquiry into the strongest arguments advanced for it, candidly to propose them in their utmost force, and closely to answer them; avoiding, as much as might be, such reproaches as are unworthy of a Christian, or an inquirer after truth, though I met with frequent provocation, and found some time how true it is, "that it is difficult to resist the temptation of writing a satire against a satirist."

It was not amusement I aimed at, or to please my own fancy, or tickle the reader's ears with the jingle of words, or divert and bias the judgment by a flood of rhetoric. I never designed to set up for an orator. My business lies quite another way; it is what I lay no claim to, and what I think is to be avoided in discourses of this kind. All I aimed at as to language, was to clothe my thoughts in plain and intelligible expressions. The reader is to expect no more, and if he miss this, I hope it will be but rarely.

It is not to be expected, that a discourse which was begun in an inverted order, the middle part being first written, and that was composed in the intervals of business of a very different nature, at spare hours, by one of no great experience, and an utter stranger to writings of this sort, shall be free of blemishes that may offend nicer palates. Some few repetitions could not, at least without more pains in transcribing than I had either leisure or inclination for, well be avoided. Nor could a discourse so often interrupted by other business, and upon so very different subjects, be carried on with that equality of style that were to be wished, especially by one who never affected much elegance of language. In a word, the work is long, much longer than I designed; and yet, as I am otherwise stated and engaged, I could not easily shorten it, without injuring the subject. If he pleases to inspect the book, he may possibly find, that I had reason for insisting at that length I have done. However, every one has not his art who could inclose Homer's Iliad in a nutshell.

I am sensible, that what I have introduced in the first chapter of the ensuing treatise concerning the occasions of deism, will grate hard upon a set of men, who have for many years bygone carried all before them, and so took it ill to have any censures bestowed on them, though they did severely animadvert upon the real or supposed faults of others. As to this I have not much to say by way of apology. That deism has sprung up, and grows apace amongst us, is confessed on all hands. Others have offered their conjectures concerning the occasions of its increase. Why I might not offer my opinion also, I know no reason. The principal subject of the ensuing treatise suffers not, though I should herein be mistaken. In proposing my conjecture, I did not pursue the interest of any party; but have freely blamed all parties. If the sticklers for the Arminian or Socinian divinity are touched, it was because I thought they were to be blamed, and therefore I have withstood them to their face. As to the tendency of their principles, I have been sparing, because that debate has been sufficiently agitated in the Low Countries between the contending parties. The reader who would be satisfied as to this, may peruse those who have directly managed this charge, and the answers

that have been made, and judge upon the whole matter as he finds cause.* But whatever may be as to this, the manner of their management may perhaps be found less capable of a colourable defence; and it is upon this that I have principally insisted. To oppose, especially from the pulpit, with contempt, buffoonery, banter, and satire, principles that sober persons of no contrary persuasion do own to have at least a very plausible-like foundation in the word of God, and which have been for near sixty or seventy years after the reformation the constant doctrine of the fathers and sons of the Church of England, and have by them been inserted into her articles,† and so become a part of her doctrine, is a practice that I do not well understand how to excuse, or free from the imputation of profanity, and which hath too manifest a tendency to atheism, to admit of any tolerable defence. The scriptures and truths that have any countenance in them, or opinions which they seem, to persons otherwise sober, pious, and judicious, not only to teach, but to inculcate as of the highest importance, are not a meet subject for raillery; nor is the pulpit a meet place for it. This is that for which principally I have blamed them, and this I cannot retract. If they take this ill, I ask them, have not others as much reason to take it ill that the doctrines of the Church of England, taught in her articles and homilies, and professed by her learned bishops, who composed them, and by her sons for so long a track of time, as consonant to, found in, and grounded on the word of God, should be so petulently traduced by wit, raillery, and declamatory invectives from the press and the pulpit; and that too by those who have subscribed to these articles and homilies? This management has been complained of by sober persons of all parties, churchmen and dissenters, contra-remonstrants and remonstrants too, as I could make appear, if there were occasion for it: And why I might not also complain, I want yet to be informed. None is charged save the guilty. Others who are free, have no reason to be angry. And, perhaps, they who will be offended at this, would scarcely have been pleased if I had let it alone.

In the tenth chapter of this treatise, I have opposed the opinion which asserts the heathen world under a government of grace. I know it is maintained by many learned men, both at home and abroad, from whose memory, if dead, or just respect, if alive, I designed not to detract. Nor did I design to list them with the deists, whom I know to have been solidly opposed by several who were of this opinion. But yet I do think the opinion of itself destitute of any solid foundation, with all deference to them, who think otherwise, either in scripture, reason, or experience. And I am further of the mind, that the learned abettors of it, had never embraced an assertion that exposes them to so many perplexing difficulties, and puts them upon a necessity of using so many, I had almost said, unintelligible distinctions for its support, if they had not been driven to it by some peculiar hypothesis in divinity which they have seen meet to embrace. If any intend to prove what I have denied, I wish it may be done by proper arguments, directly proving it, and not by advancing an hypothesis that remotely infers it, and which, in itself, or at least as proposed by those whom I have met with, is so darkened by a huge multitude of subtile, mysterious, and uncouth distinctions, that I can scarce ever project so much time as to understand them. However

* See *Arcana Arminianismi*, by Videlius, and *Videlius Rapsodus*, with *Videlius his Rejoinders*, &c.

† See *Bishop of Sarum on the Articles*, Preface, p. 7, 8.

this much I must say, that so cross does this opinion seem to scripture, reason, and experience, that it will go a very great way to weaken the credit of any hypothesis on which it inevitably follows. However, I hope this may be said, and different opinions about this point, without any breach of charity, may be retained. I know the abettors of this opinion are hearty friends in the main to the cause I here advocate.

The scheme, I have in the close of that chapter offered by way of digression, of God's government of the heathen world, is not designed as a full account of that matter, which as to many of its concernments is of those things that are not revealed, and so belong not to us; much less is it designed to be the ground of a peremptory judgment as to the eternal state of them who are without the church: but only to let see, that any thing we certainly know as to God's dealings with them, in the common course of his providence, may, upon other suppositions and principles, beside that rejected, be accounted for. The judicious and sober reader may judge of it as he sees cause. I hope I have in a matter of such difficulty avoided any unbecoming curiosity, or affecting to be wise above what is written.

If any blame me for the multitude of quotations, I answer, the subject I undertook rendered this unavoidable. I have used the utmost candour in them. Sometimes out of a regard to brevity I have avoided the translation of testimonies quoted from authors who wrote in a different language. The learned will not complain of this: and if any person of tolerable judgment, who is not learned, will be at pains to peruse the ensuing discourse, he will find as much said, without regarding those quotations, as may satisfy his mind upon this subject.

As to what I have, in the ensuing papers, ascribed to Mr Gildon, publisher of the oracles of reason, I had written it before I heard of his recovery from deism. But yet I thought it not meet to alter it, because there are, no doubt, many others who entertain the same notions he then did maintain, and my opposition is to the principles and not the persons. As for his recovery, I congratulate it, and wish it may be such as may secure him from an after reckoning for the hurt he has done.

If any Deist shall see meet to undertake this debate, I decline it not. If they treat my book as they have done those of others, every way my superiors, and as rats are wont to do, gnaw only the outside, divert to incident things that are not to the purpose, and single out rather what seems exceptionable than what is of moment, following him who did so, and who, even in those things he professed to treat of, left willingly in the dark what he felt rather beyond his power to elucidate. I have somewhat else to do, than to take any notice of such impertinency. If any shall offer a solid and rational confutation, which yet I am not afraid of, and convince me not by jest, buffoonery, and raillery, but by solid arguments of my being in a mistake, I shall very readily retract what I have advanced, and even be ready to give him his share of praise who has shown me my error.

INTRODUCTION.

In this sceptical age, which questions almost every thing, it is still owned as certain, that "all men must die." If there were any place for disputing this, there are not a few, who would spare no pains to bring themselves into the disbelief of a truth, that gives them so much disturbance, in the courses they love and seem resolved to follow: but the case is so clear, and the evidence of this principle so pregnant, which is every day confirmed by new experiments, that the most resolved infidel is forced, when it comes in his way, though unwilling, to give his assent, and moan out an Amen. "The grave is the house appointed for all living." Some arrive sooner, some later; but all come there at length. The obscurity of the meanest cannot hide him, nor the power of the greatest screen him from the impartial hand of death, the executioner of fate, if I may be allowed the use of a word so much abused. As its coming is placed beyond doubt, so its aspect is hideous beyond the reach of thought, the force of expression, or the utmost efforts of the finest pencil, in the most artful hand. In a moment it dashes down a fabric, that has more of curious contrivance than all the celebrated pieces put together, which the most refined human wits have invented, even when carried to the greatest height, which the improvements of so many subsequent generations, after the utmost of application and diligence, could bring them to. It puts a stop to many thousand motions, which, though strangely diversified, did all concur, with wonderful exactness, to maintain and carry on the design of the glorious and divine artificer. How this divine and wonderful machine was first erected, set a-going, and has, for so long a tract of time, regularly performed all its motions, could never yet be understood by the most elevated understandings. "Canst thou tell how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child?" is a challenge to all the sons of art, to unfold the mystery. Many have accepted it, but all have been foiled. Something they could say: but, in spite of it all, the thing they found a mystery they left so still. How can one then look on the dissolution of so admirable a contrivance, a machine so curious, and so far surpassing human art, without the deepest and most sensible regret. It untwists that mysterious tie, whereby soul and body were so fast linked together, breaks up that intimate and close correspondence, that entire sympathy which was founded thereon, dislodges an old inhabitant; and while it lingers, being unwilling to remove, death pulls that curious fabric, wherein it dwelt, down about its ears, and so forces it thence, to take up its lodgings, it can scarcely tell where. And upon its removal, that curious fabric, which a little before was full of life, activity, vigour, order, warmth, and every thing else that is pleasant, is now left a dead, inactive, cold lump, or disordered mass of loathsome matter, full of stench and corruption. Now the body is a spectacle so hideous, that they who loved, and who embraced it before, cannot abide the sight or smell of it; but shut it up in a coffin, and not content with

that, away they carry it, and lodge it among worms, and the vilest insects in the bowels of the earth, to be consumed, devoured, torn and rent, by the most abominable vermin that lodge in the grave.

We have all heard of the afflictions of Job. Two or three messengers arrive, each after another, and still the last is worst. Every one tells a story. The first is sad; but it is still more melancholy that follows. The disaster is so terrible, that it fills the world with just astonishment. And yet after all, what is this to death, which alone is able to furnish subjects, more than enough, for some thousands of such melancholy messages! One might bring the dying man the melancholy tidings, that he was divested of all his beneficial, pleasant, and honourable employments. While he is yet speaking, another might be ready to bid him denude himself of all his possessions: a third, to continue the tragedy, might assure him that there is a commission issued out to an impartial hand, to tear him from the embraces of his dear relations, without regarding the heart-rending cries of a loving wife, the meltings of tender infants, the intercessions of dear friends. While others, continuing still the mournful scene, might assure him that he was no more to relish the fragrant of the spring, or taste the delights of the sons of men, or see the pleasant light of the sun, or hear the charming airs of music, or the yet more useful converse of friends. And to make the matter more melancholy still, if it can well be so, the story might be shut up with a rueful account of the parting of soul and body, with all the horrible disasters that follow upon this parting.

Thus the case evidently stands. Not a tittle of all this admits of question. To every man it may be said, "The same tale is told of thee." What a wonder is it, that so grave and important a subject is so little in the thoughts of men? What apology can be made for the folly of mankind, who are at so much pains to shelter themselves against lesser inconveniencies, quite overlooking this, that is of infinitely greater consequence!

Here is the light side of death, which every body may see. What a rueful and astonishing prospect doth it give us? Where shall we find comfort against that dismal day, wherein all this shall be verified in us? He is something worse than a fool or madman, that will not look to this. And he is yet more mad who thinks, that rational comfort in such a case can be maintained upon dark, slender, and conjectural grounds.

It is certain that that which can yield support, must be something on the other side of time. The one side of death affords nothing but matter of terror, if we are not enabled to look forward, and get such a sight of the other, as may balance it, we may reasonably say, that "it had been better for us never to have been."

Undoubtedly, therefore, no question is so useful, so necessary, so noble, and truly worthy of the mind of man as this. "What shall become of me after death? What have I to look for on the other side of that awful change?"

Those arts and sciences which exercise the industry and consideration of the greater part of the thinking world, are calculated for time, and aim at the pleasure or advantage of a present life. It is Religion alone that directly concerns itself in the important question last mentioned, and pretends to offer comforts against the melancholy aspect of death, by securing us in an upmaking for our losses on the other side of time. Men,

who are not blind to their own interest, had need therefore to take care of their choice of their religion. If they neglect it altogether, as many now do, they forfeit all prospect of relief. If they choose a wrong one, that is not able to reach the end, they are no less unhappy. The world may call them wits, or what else they please, who either wholly neglect and laugh over all inquiries after religion, or who superficially look into matters of this nature, and pass a hasty judgment. But sober reason will look on them as "somewhat below the condition of the beasts that perish."

It is much to be regretted, that the bulk of mankind found their principles, as well as practice and hopes, on no better bottom than education, which gives but too just occasion for the smart reflection of the witty, though profane poet.

By education most have been misled ;
 So they believe, because they were so bred.
 The priest continues what the nurse began :
 And thus the child imposes on the man."

Hind and Panther.

Most part seek no better reason for their belief and practice than custom and education. Whatever those offer in principle, they greedily swallow down, and venture all on so weak a foundation. And this sure is one of the great reasons why so many miscarry in this important matter. It is true, in this inquiring age, many, especially of the better quality, scorn this way. But it is to be feared that the greater part of them, flying on extremes, as it is common in such cases, have fallen into another and a worse one, if not to themselves, yet certainly of more pernicious consequence to the public. They set up for wits and men of sense. They pretend to have found out great mistakes in the principles of their education, the religion of their country; and thereon, without more ado, reject it in whole, and turn sceptics in religion. And yet after all this noise, most of them neither understand the religion they reject, nor know they what to substitute in its room, which is certainly an error of the worst consequence imaginable to the public; since men once arrived at this pass, can never be depended on. Men may talk as they please. A man of no religion is a man not to be bound, and therefore is absolutely unmeet for any share in a society which cannot subsist, if the sacred ties of religion hold it not together.

But whatever course such persons, on the one hand or other steer; the more considerate and better part of mankind, in matters of so high importance, will, with the nicest care, try all, that they may "hold fast what is good." If a man once understands the importance of the case, he will find reason to look some deeper, and think more seriously of this matter than either the unthinking generality, who receive all in the lump, without trial, as it is given them, or, the forward would-be wits, that oftentimes are guilty of as great, and much more pernicious credulity in rejecting all, as the other in receiving all.

But whereas there are so many different religions in the world, and all of them pretend to conduct us in this important inquiry: which of them shall we choose? The Deists, to drive us into their religion, which consists only of five articles, agreed to, as they pretend, by all the world, would bear us in hand, that a choice is impossible to be made of any par-

ticular religion, till we have gone through, with such a particular examination of every pretender, and all things that can be said for or against it, as no man is able to make. Blount tells us, as Herbert before had done, That * “unless a man read all authors, speak with all learned men, and know all languages, it is impossible to come to a clear solution of all doubts.” And so in effect, it is pretended impossible to be satisfied about the truth of any particular religion. If this reasoning did hold, I should not despair to make it appear that no truth whatsoever is to be received; and in particular, that their so much boasted of catholic religion cannot rationally be entertained by any man. If we can be satisfied upon rational grounds about no truth, till we have heard and considered all, that not only has been said, but may be alleged against it; what truth can we believe? Here it is easy to observe that some cannot do, unless they overdo. The design of such reasonings is obvious: some men would cast us loose as to all religion, that we may be brought under a necessity to take up with any fancy they shall be pleased to offer us; a man that is sinking will take hold of the most slender twig. The papists have vigorously pursued this course in opposition to the protestants, to drive them into the arms of their infallible guide. And indeed the learned Herbert’s reasonings on this point, after whom the modern deists do but copy, seem to be borrowed from the Romanists, and are urged upon a design not unfavourable to the church of Rome, of which perhaps more afterwards.

But to wave this thin sophistry, any one that will, with a suitable application, engage in the consideration of what religion he is to choose, will quickly find himself eased of this unmanageable task, which the deists would set him. His inquiry will soon be brought to a narrow compass, and the pretenders, that will require any nice consideration, will be found very few.

For, a very overly consideration of the religions in the heathen world, will give any considerate mind ground enough to rest fully assured that the desired satisfaction as to future happiness, and the means of attaining it, are not thence to be expected. Here he will not find what may have the least appearance of satisfying. The wisest of the heathens scarcely ever pretended to satisfy themselves, much less others, upon these heads. All things here are dark, vain, incoherent, inconsistent, wild, and plainly ridiculous for the most part; as will further appear in our progress. Their religions were, generally speaking, calculated for other purposes, and looked not so far as eternity.

For will it be more difficult to get over any stop that the religion of Mahomet may lay in our inquirer’s way. Let a man seriously peruse the Alcoran, and if he has his senses about him, he cannot but there see the most pregnant evidences of the grossest, most scandalous, and impudent imposture, that ever was obtruded upon the world. Here he must expect no other evidence for what he is to believe, but the bare assertion of one, who was scandalously impious to that degree, that his own followers know not how to apologize for him. If you inquire for any other evidence, you are doomed by the Alcoran † to everlasting ruin, and his slaves are ordered to destroy you. He forbids any inquiry into his

*Blount Religio Laici, p. 91. Herbert Religio Laici, p. 11.

† Alcoran, chap. 4.

religion, or the grounds of it, and therefore you must either admit in bulk the entire bundle of fopperies, inconsistencies, and shocking absurdities, that are cast together in the Alcoran, without any trial, or reject all : and in this case, no wise man will find it hard to make a choice.

After one has proceeded thus far, he may easily see, that he is now inevitably cast upon one of four conclusions ; *1st*, He must conclude it certain all religion is vain, that there is nothing to be expected after this life, and so commence atheist. Or *2dly*, he must conclude, that certainty is not attainable about these things ; and so prove sceptic. Or, *3dly*, he must pretend, that every one's reason unassisted is able to conduct him in matters of religion, ascertain him of future happiness, and direct as to the means of attaining it ; and so set up for natural religion, and turn deist. Or, *4thly*, he must acquiesce in the revealed religion contained in the Scriptures, and so turn Christian, or at least Jew.

As to the first of these courses, no man will go into it, till he has abandoned reason. An Atheist is a monster in nature. That there is nothing to be expected after this life, and that man's soul dies with his body, is a desperate conclusion, which ruins the foundation of all human happiness ;* even in the judgment of the deists themselves. There are two material exceptions which are sufficient to deter any thinking man from closing with it.

The one is the hideousness of its aspect. Annihilation is so horrible to human nature, and has so frightful a visage to men who have a desire of perpetuity, inlaid in their very frame, that none can look at it seriously without the utmost dread. 'Tis true, guilty atheists would fain take sanctuary here ; yet were they brought to think seriously of the case, they would not find that relief in it which they project. I have been credibly informed, that a gentleman of no contemptible parts, who had lived as if indeed he were to fear or hope nothing after time, being in prison and fearing death (though he escaped it and yet lives) fell a thinking seriously, when alone, of annihilation : and the fears of it had so deep and horrible an impression on his mind, that he professed to a gentleman, who made him a visit in prison, and found him in a grievous damp, that the thoughts of annihilation were so dreadful to him, that he had rather think of a thousand years in hell. Guilty sinners, to ease their consciences, and screen them from the disquieting apprehensions of an after-reckoning, retreat to this, as a refuge ; but they think no more about it save only this, and that in an overly way, that it will free them from the punishment they dread and deserve. But if they would sedately view it and take under their consideration all the horror of the case, their natures would recoil and shrink : it would create uneasiness instead of quiet, and increase the strait rather than relieve them from it.

Besides, which is the other exception against it, were there never so much comfort in it, as there is none ; yet it is impossible to prove that there is nothing after this life. There is nothing that is tolerable can be said for it. None shall ever evince the certainty of the soul's dying with the body, till he has overthrown the being of a God, which can never be done so long as there is any thing certain among men. Further, as there is little or nothing to be said for it, so there is much to be said against it. Reason affords strong presumptions, at least, for a future

* Letter to a Deist, p. 125.

state. And all the arguments, which conclude for the truth of Christianity, join their united force to support the certainty of a state after this life. Till these are removed out of the way, there is no access for any to enjoy the imaginary comfort of this supposition. But who will undertake solidly to overturn so many arguments which have stood the test of ages? They who are likely to be most forward, and favour this cause most, dare scarce allow these reasonings a fair hearing, which plead for a future state, for fear of rivetting the impression of the truth deeper on their minds, which they desire to shake themselves loose of. And how then will they overthrow them? In fine, he is a madman, who will go into a conclusion, whereof he can never be certain, and wherein, were it sure, he can have no satisfaction. The first forbids the judgment, the last dissuades the will and affections from resting in it.

As to the second conclusion above mentioned, that sets up for scepticism in matters of religion, and bids us live at peradventures as to what is to be feared or hoped after time; it is a course that nothing can justify save absolute necessity. It lies open to the worst of inconveniences. Nothing can be imagined more melancholy than its consequences, and the pretences for it are vain and frivolous.

If it is really thus, that man can arrive at no certainty in matters of religion, and about his state after time, how deplorable is man's condition? His case is comfortless beyond what can be well conceived. Nor can his enjoyments afford him any solid satisfaction, while ghostly death looks him in the face, and the sword hangs over his head supported by a hair. Will not the prospect of this rueful change, of whose dismal attendants we have given some account, embitter his sweetest enjoyments? and will not the horror of the case be much increased by resolving upon a perplexing uncertainty as to what may come after? In how dismal a plight is the poor man, who, on the one hand, is certain of the speedy arrival of death with all its frightful attendants; and, on the other, is told that he must rove in uncertainty, till the event clear him, whether he shall be entirely annihilated, and so plunge into that horrible gulf where atheists seek sanctuary! Or if he shall not be hurried headlong into these endless torments, which the consciences of guilty sinners, when awakened, presage; or, if he shall soar aloft into regions of endless bliss, which sinful mortals have but little reason to expect; or, finally, whether he is not to launch out into some state reducible to none of these. If here we behove to fix, one would not know how to evite two conclusions that are horrible to think of; That our reason, whereby we are capable of foreseeing, and are affected with things at a distance, is a heavy curse; and that the profligate atheist, who endeavours to mend this fault, in his constitution, by a continual debauch, that never allows him to think any more of what is certainly to come, than if he were a brute incapable of forethought, is the wisest man.

Besides, as was above insinuated, the pretences for this course are vain. 'Tis true, most of those who set up for wits in this unhappy age, are mere sceptics in religion, who admit nothing as certain, but boldly question every thing and live at peradventures. Yet we are not obliged to think that this scepticism is the result of a serious inquiry, and the want of certainty thereon; but those gentlemen's way of living is inconsistent with serious religion; they are therefore desirous to have such a set of principles as may, if not favour them in the practices they have a mind

to follow, yet not incommode them sore. This principle gives not absolute security against impunity; but it seems, and but seems, to justify them in a present neglect of religion, and gives them a may be for an escape from feared and deserved punishments; and favours that laziness that cannot search for truth, where it lies not open to the eye, even of those who care not to see it. Their practice and course of life shows them impatient of restraints—that they love liberty, or rather licentiousness; and are not willing to come under any bonds. They greedily grasp at any difficulty that seems to make never so little against religion; and evidence that they bear it no real good will. They neither converse much with books, nor men that may afford them satisfaction, in reference to their real scruples, which is proof enough they design not to be satisfied. They are light and jocular in their converse about the most serious matters, an evidence that their design is not to be informed. It is a good observation of the wise man, Prov. xiv. 6, “A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.” This is the real mystery of the matter with those gentlemen, whatever they may pretend.

I know they want no pretences, taking enough with the unthinking, whereby they would justify themselves in their infidelity. The principal one is, That they find it easy to load religion with abundance of difficulties, not easily, if at all, capable of solution. But after all, these gentlemen use those objections as the sceptics did of old, not so much to maintain any settled principle, no, not their beloved one, whereof now we speak; as to create them work and make sport with those who would seriously confute them, and to ward off blows from themselves, who have neither principles nor practice capable of a rational defence.

It is likely indeed that sometimes they may meet with such, who, although they own religion, are yet incapable of defending it against such objections. But this is no wonder; since there are weak men of all persuasions. And their weakness is, or ought to be, no real prejudice to the truth they maintain. Besides, every one may know that ignorance of any subject is fertile of doubts, and will start abundance of difficulties, whereas it requires a more full and exact acquaintance with the nature of things to solve them; and this falls not to every one's share.

Further, if this be allowed a reasonable exception against religion, that it is liable to exceptions not easy to be solved, it will hold good against all other sorts of knowledge, as well as against religion; yea, and I may add, it concludes much stronger; for the farther any subject is above our reach, the less reason we have to expect, that we shall be capable of solving every difficulty that may be started against it. There is no part of our knowledge, that is not encumbered with difficulties as hard to be satisfyingly solved, as those commonly urged against religion. If this be a sufficient reason to question religion, that there are arguments which may be urged against it not capable of a fair, or at least, an easy solution; I doubt not, upon the same ground, to bring the gentlemen who maintain this, if they will follow out their principle, to reject the most evident truths, that we receive upon the credit of moral, metaphysical, and mathematical demonstrations; yea, or even upon the testimony of our senses. For I know few of these truths which we receive upon any of those grounds, against which a person of a very ordinary spirit may not start difficulties, which perhaps no man alive can give a fair account of; and yet no man is so foolish to call in question those truths,

because he cannot solve the difficulties which every idle head may start upon those subjects. I may give innumerable instances of the difficulties wherewith other parts of human knowledge are embarrassed; I shall only hint at a few.

That matter is divisible in, or at least, consists of indivisible points, is, with some, a truth next to self-evident; that the quite contrary is true, and matter is divisible in infinitum, appears no less certain to many others.* But if either of them should pretend themselves capable of solving the difficulties that lie against their respective opinions, it were sufficient to make all men of sense and learning doubt of their capacity and judgment: For the difficulties on both hands are such, that no ingenious man that understands them, will pretend himself capable of giving a fair solution of those, which press that side of the question he is inclined to.

Again, whether we will or will not, we must believe one side, and but one side of the question is true; that either matter is divisible in infinitum, or not; that it consists of indivisibles or not; these are contradictions. And it is one of the most evident propositions that the mind of man is acquainted with, that contradictions cannot be true, or that both sides of a contradiction cannot hold. And yet against this truth, whereon much of our most certain knowledge depends, insoluble difficulties may be urged: For it may be pretended, that here both sides of the contradiction are true, and this pretence may be enforced by the arguments above mentioned, which confirm the two opposite opinions, which no mortal can answer. Shall we therefore believe that contradictions may be true?

That motion is possible I am not likely to doubt, nor can I, while I know that I can rise and walk; nor is he like to doubt of it, who sees me walk. And yet I doubt not the most ingenious of our atheistical wits would find himself sufficiently straitened, were the arguments of Zeno Elates against motion well urged by a subtile disputant. I shall offer one argument against motion, which I am fully satisfied will puzzle the most subtile adversaries of religion to solve satisfiingly. There are stronger arguments proving that matter is divisible in infinitum than any mortal can solve or answer, though I perhaps believe it untrue. And it is as certain as the sun is in the firmament, that if matter is divisible in infinitum, it consists of an infinite number of parts (what some talk of indefinite is a shelter of ignorance, and if it is used any other way than as a shield to ward off difficulties for a while in a public dispute, the users cannot be excused either of gross ignorance, rooted prejudice, or disingenuity). This being laid down as proven, and proven it may be by arguments, which none living can satisfy, that matter is divisible in infinitum, and that consequently it contains an infinite number of parts. Nor is it less certain, that according to these conclusions laid down, if one body move upon the surface of another, as, for instance, an inch in a minute's time, it must pass by an infinite number of parts; and it is un-

* Locke on Human Understanding, Edit. 5. p. 207. "I would fain have instanced in our notion of Spirit any thing more perplexed, or nearer a contradiction, than the very notion of body includes in it; the divisibility in infinitum of any finite extension, involving us, whether we grant or deny it, in consequences impossible to be explicate, or made in our apprehensions consistent; consequences, that carry greater difficulty, and more apparent absurdity, than any thing that can follow from the notion of an immaterial substance."

deniable, that it cannot pass one of that infinite number of parts without some portion of time; now if so, what a vast time will it require to make that little journey, which we know can be performed in a moment? Will it not evidently require an eternity? What difficulty can any urge more difficult to be solved against religion than this? And yet for all this he were a fool who would doubt of motion.

As to mathematical certainty, though many boasts are made of the firmness of its demonstrations, yet these may, upon this ground, be all called in question. And I nothing doubt, that if men's interests, real or pretended, lay as cross to them, as they are supposed to do to the truths of a religion, many more exceptions might be made against them, than are against those, and upon full as good, if not better, reason. In justification of this assertion, I might proceed to demonstrate how trifling even the definitions of geometry, the firmest of all the mathematical sciences, are. Its definitions might be alleged upon no inconsiderable grounds to be trifling, nonsensical, and plainly ridiculous. Its demands or postulates, impracticable. Its axioms or self evident propositions, controvertible, and by themselves they are controverted. Any one who would see this made good in particular instances, may consult (besides others) the learned Huetius's *Demonstratio Evangelica*, where in the illustration of his definitions, axioms, and postulates, he compares them with those of geometry, and prefers them to those, and shows they are encumbered with fewer difficulties than the other, though without derogating from the just worth and evidence of mathematical sciences. Besides what he has observed, I may add this one thing more, that those sciences deserve not any great regard, save as they are applied to the use of life, and in a subserviency to man's advantage. And when thus they are applied to practice, the difficulty is considerably increased, and they may easily be loaded with innumerable and insoluble inconveniences. For then, their definitions cease to be the definitions of names, and are to be taken as the definitions of things that are actually in being. Their demands must not only be practicable, but put in practice. And who sees not how many inextricable difficulties the practiser will be cast upon? The demonstration may proceed bravely so long as they hold in the theory, and mean by a point, "that which has no tangible part," and the same may be said of lines and surfaces, and all their figures, without obliging us to believe that really there are any such things. But when we come to the practice, they must go further, and take it for granted, that there are such points, lines, surfaces, and figures. This turns what was before only an explication of a name, into the definition of a thing. And therefore I am now left at liberty to dispute, whether there is any such thing? or whether indeed it is possible that there should be such? And who sees not now that they are encumbered with as many difficulties as may perhaps be urged against any science whatsoever.

It were endless to enumerate the things we must believe, without being capable to resolve the difficulties about them. The veriest infidel must suppose that something is eternal, or all things are eternal, or that they jump into being without any cause. Which ever he shall choose, he is led into a labyrinth of difficulties, which no mortal wit can clear. We must all own, that either matter and motion are the principle of thought; or, that there are immaterial substances which affect matter, and are strangely affected by what befalls it. Which ever side any shall

choose, he is cast upon inextricable difficulties. Much more might be said on this head; but what has been said is more than enough to show that if this course is taken, it saps the foundations of all human knowledge, and there is no part of it safe.

Besides this way of questioning religion upon pretence of difficulties lying against it, is contrary to the common sense of mankind, contradicts the practice of all wise men, and is inconsistent with the very nature of our faculties: for, if I have clear, unexceptionable, and convincing proof for any truth, it is against all reason to reject it, because I have not so full and comprehensive knowledge of the nature and circumstances of the object, as is necessary to enable me to solve all difficulties that may occur about it. Yea, such is the nature of our faculties, that to justify, in the opinion of the nicest inquirers after truth, nay, to extort an assent, clear proof is sufficient: whereas to untie all knots, and solve all objections, perfect and comprehensive knowledge is absolutely needful; which man's condition allows him not to expect about the meanest things. And the more remote any thing lies from common observation, the less reason there is still to look for a fulness of knowledge and exemption from difficulties. If therefore men will turn sceptics in religion, to justify themselves, they must attempt the proofs whereon it is grounded, Sampson-like they must grasp the pillars that support the fabric, and pull them down. If this is not done, nothing is done. And he that will undertake this, must have a full view of their force, and find where their strength lies: Now a serious view of this will be sufficient to deter any wise man from the undertaking.

In a word, this scepticism can yield no ease or satisfaction to a reasonable soul. For if a man shall think rationally, his reason will suggest to him, that though all religion at present seems uncertain to him, yet upon trial perhaps he may find the grounds of religion so evident, that he cannot withhold his assent; this will at least oblige him to a serious inquiry into the truth. Next, in uncertainties (supposing after serious inquiry he still thinks the truths of religion such) a prudent man will incline to what is most probable. Finally, he will choose and steer such a course of life as will be safest, in case he shall in experience afterward, find, that there is a God and a future state, all which show the folly of our sceptics, and, were it seriously considered, would much mar their design, which is thereby to justify a licentious life.

Now we have considered, and sufficiently exposed the two first branches of the above mentioned choice; and consequently every man must find himself cast upon a necessity of one of two. He must either betake himself to a natural religion, and so turn Deist; or he must embrace the scriptures, and turn Christian; for as to the Jewish religion, it is not likely to gain many converts.

If therefore we are able to demonstrate the utter insufficiency of natural religion, in opposition to the Deists who set up for it, we reduce every man to his choice, that he must be a Christian or an Atheist; or, which is the same upon the matter, a man of no religion; for an insufficient religion is in effect none. And to demonstrate this, that natural Religion is utterly insufficient—that unassisted reason is not able to guide us to happiness, and satisfy us as to the great concerns of religion, is the design of the subsequent sheets. In them we have clearly stated, and endeavoured with closeness to argue this point. We have brought, the pleadings of the learned Lord Herbert, and the modern Deists, who do

but copy after him, to the bar of reason, examined their utmost force, and, if I mistake not, found them weak and inconclusive.

As for the occasion of my engagement in this controversy, it was not such as commonly gives rise to writings of this nature. I undertook it with no design of publication. I was provoked by no adversary in particular: but every man being obliged to understand upon what grounds he receives his religion, I studied the point for my own satisfaction and in compliance with my duty.

As for the reasons of my undertaking this part of the controversy, I shall not say much. The only wise God, who has determined the times before appointed, and made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the earth, has appointed them the bounds of their habitation, cut out different pieces of work for them, cast them into different circumstances, and thereby exposed them to trials and temptations that are not of the same kind. As every man is obliged to cultivate in the best manner he can the bounds of land assigned to him, and defend his possessions; so every one is concerned to improve and defend, after the best form he may, those truths which his circumstances have obliged him to take peculiar notice of, and his temptations, of whatever sort, have endeavoured or may attempt to wrest out of his hands.

Besides, we live in a warlike age, wherein every one must be of a party in matters of religion. And religion is a cause, in which, when disputed, no man is allowed to stand neutral. As all are concerned to choose the right side, so every one is obliged to provide himself with the best armour his arsenal can afford, both for defending himself and others that own the same cause, and to annoy the common enemy. Nor is this work peculiarly confined unto those who by office are obliged to it; for "in public broils every man is a soldier."

Besides, it is well known that the most bold attempt that ever was made upon revealed religion, since the entrance of Christianity into the world, has been made, in our day, by men who set up for natural religion, and who have gone over from Christianity unto a refined paganism, under the name of Deism. Two things they have attempted,—to overthrow revelation, and to advance natural religion. The last work has been undertaken, I may without breach of charity boldly say it, not so much out of any real affection to the principles or duties of natural religion, as to avoid the odium inevitably following upon a renunciation of all religion; and because they saw that men would not easily quit Christianity without something were substituted in its room, that might at least have the name of religion. Revealed religion has been worthily defended by many, of old and of late, at home and abroad; but the insufficiency of natural religion has been less insisted on, at least in that way that is necessary to straiten an obstinate adversary. And several things incline me to think an attempt of this nature seasonable, if not necessary, at this time.

The times are infectious, and Deism is the contagion that spreads. And that which has taken many, particularly of our unwary youth of the better quality, off their feet, and engaged them to espouse this cause, is the high pretence that this way makes to reason. They tell us that their religion is entirely reasonable, and that they admit nothing, save what this dictates to them, and they endeavour to represent others as easy and credulous men. Now I thought it meet to demonstrate, for

undeceiving of such, that none are more credulous, none have less reason upon their side, than they who set up for rational religion.

Again, we have stood sufficiently long upon the defensive part; we have repulsed their efforts against revelation. It seems now reasonable, that we should act offensively, and try how they can defend their own religion, and whether they can give as good account of it, as has been given of Christianity. To stand alway upon the defensive part, is to make the enemy doubt ours, turn and be proud of their own strength.

The reasonableness of this will further appear, if we consider the quality of the adversaries we have to do with, and their manner of management. The enemies who have engaged revealed religion, sensible of their own weakness, to defend themselves at home, and endure close fight, do commonly make inroads, where they expect none, or a faint resistance. They design not so much to conquer, as to disturb. Jest, buffoonery, or, at best, sophisms and such little artifices are the arguments they use, and the weapons of their warfare. The best way to make such rovers keep at home, is to carry the war into their own country, and to ruin those retreats they betake themselves to when attacked. They have seen what Christians can say in defence of revealed religion. It is now high time to see how they can acquit themselves on behalf of natural religion. It is easy to impugn. It is a defence that gives a best proof of the defender's skill, and says most for the cause he maintains.

I own indeed that most who have evinced the truth of revealed religion, have said something of the weakness of natural religion. But this has only been by the bye, and in a way too loose to straiten obstinate opposers, not to speak of the too large concessions that have been made them by some.

Finally, natural religion being the only retreat to which the apostates from Christianity betake themselves, and whereby they think themselves secured from the imputation of plain atheism; it is hoped that a full and convincing discovery of its weakness, may incline such as are not quite debauched, to look how they quit Christianity, and engage with that which, if this attempt is successful, must henceforward pass for disguised atheism.

It now only remains, that I offer some account of the reasons that have induced me to manage this controversy in a method so far different from that which is commonly used. The reasons of this have been above insinuated, and I shall not insist much farther on them, lest I should seem to detract from performances to which I pay a very great regard. The method some have chosen, in managing this controversy with the deists, to me appears inconvenient. They begin with an endeavour to establish the grounds of natural religion, and by the help of light borrowed from revelation, they carry the matter so far, and extend natural religion to such a compass, that it looks pretty like complete: which has too evident a tendency to lessen its real defects, and make them appear inconsiderable.

Again, I am afraid that some have gone near to give up the whole cause. This fault I would be very loath to charge upon all. Many, I know, have dealt faithfully in it, and deserve praise. But how to excuse some in this case, I know not. One tells us, that "It is true indeed that natural religion declares and comprises all the parts of religion, that are generally and in all times either necessary or requisite!"* and much more to the same purpose. This is such another assertion of the weakness of

* Ubi supra, p. 199.

natural religion against the Deists, as the same author gives us of the perfection of the scriptures, in opposition to the same persons in another place of his book. "I could," says he, "prove, I think, by undeniable, unavoidable instances what Mr Gregory of Oxford says in his preface to some critical notes on the scriptures that he published, there is no author whatsoever, saith this learned critic, that has suffered so much by the hand of time, as the Bible has."* Is this the way to overthrow the sufficiency of natural religion and to defend the scriptures? This is not the only remark I could make upon this author, were it my design. But this may let us see how necessary it is to deal a little more plainly with the asserters of natural religion.

Further, to adorn natural religion with the improvements borrowed from revelation, is the ready way to furnish those who set up for its sufficiency, with pretences to serve their design, and to straiten themselves, when they come to show its defects. And perhaps I should not mistake it far, if I asserted, that the strongest arguments urged by deists, have been drawn from unwary concession, made them by their adversaries.

And this is the more considerable, that the persons with whom we have to do in this controversy, are, generally speaking, either of no great discerning, or small application; who have no great mind to wait upon the business, or look to the bottom of it. Now when such persons find many things granted, they are ready to think all is yielded, and so run away with it, as the cause were their own. That such concessions have done no good service, there is too much reason to believe. This I am sure of, it would have been long before the deists could have trimmed up natural religion so handsomely, and made it appear so like a sufficient religion, as some have done who meant no such thing.

Finally, the apostle Paul's method is doubtless most worthy of imitation, who, when he is to prove justification by faith, and enforce an acceptance of it, strongly convinces of sin, and the utter insufficiency of works for that purpose. The best way, in my opinion, to engage men to close with revealed religion, is strongly to argue the insufficiency of natural religion.

As to the performance itself, and what I have therein attained, I am not the competent judge. Every reader must judge as he sees cause. I have not the vanity to expect that it should please every body. The vast compass of the subject, the variety of the purposes, the uncommonness of many, if not most of them, with respect to which I was left to walk in untrodden paths, and other difficulties of a like nature, with candid and judicious readers will go a great way toward my excuse in lesser escapes. As for the substance of the ensuing treatise, I am bold to hope, that upon the strictest trial it shall be found true, and pleaded for in words of truth and soberness.

* Discourse concerning Natural and Revealed Religion, by Stephen Nye, part 2, chap. 1. p. 97.

NATURAL RELIGION INSUFFICIENT,

AND

REVEALED NECESSARY

TO MAN'S HAPPINESS IN HIS PRESENT STATE.

CHAP. I.

Giving a short account of the Rise, Occasion, and Progress of Deism, especially in England, the opinions of the Deists, and the different sorts of them.

THERE is no man, who makes it his concern to understand what the state of religion has of late years been, and now is, particularly in those nations, but knows that deism has made a considerable progress. Since therefore it is against those who go under this name, that this undertaking is designed, it is highly expedient, if not plainly necessary, that in the entry we give some account of the occasions and rise of deism, the principal opinions of the deists, and some other things that may tend to clear the matter treated of in the subsequent sheets.

It is not necessary that we inquire more largely into the causes of that general defection in principle and practice from the doctrine of the Gospel, which now every where obtains; this has been judiciously done by others.

Nor will it be needful to write at length the history of deism. This I think impracticable, because the growth of this sect has been very secret, and they have generally disguised their opinions; and perhaps, till of late, they scarcely had any settled opinion in matters of religion, if yet they have such. But though it were practicable, as it is not, yet it is not necessary to our present undertaking; and if it were attempted, would require more helps and more leisure, besides other things, than I am master of.

One has of late written a pamphlet bearing this title, "An Account of the Growth of Deism in England."* The author, if he is not a deist, yet has done what in him lies to promote their cause, by setting off, with all the art and address he is master of, those things which, he says, have tempted many to turn deists, without any attempt to provide an antidote against the poison of them.

Another has written reflections upon this pamphlet,† wherein he has sufficiently shown, that those reasons alleged by the former author, are not sufficient to justify any man in turning deist: but I conceive that is not the main question. If he had a mind to disprove the other author, he should have made it appear, that the particulars, condescended upon by his anta-

* Growth of Deism, printed A. D. 1696. † Reflections on a pamphlet entitled, An Account of the Growth of Deism, 1696.

gonist, had no real influence in this apostasy. Whether they gave a just cause for it, is another question. I am satisfied they did not. But neither do those reasons of this defection, condescended on by the reflector, give a sufficient ground for it. Nor are there any reasons that can justify any in relinquishing Christianity. The inquiry in this case is not, what just grounds have the Deists to warrant them in, or engage them to this defection? for all Christians own it impossible they should have any. But the question is, what has given occasion to any thus to fall off from our religion? Now, I conceive both these writers have hit upon several of the true reasons of this; though the first is apparently guilty of deep imprudence, I wish I might not say, malice, against Christianity, in proposing those temptations, with all the advantage he could give them, and that without any antidote: for which, and other faults, he has been justly, though modestly, censured by the reflector.

Although both of them have given some account of this matter; yet I conceive so much has not been said, as may supersede a further inquiry, or make us despair of observing many things that have in some degree had a considerable influence, which are overlooked by both. Wherefore, we shall in few words propose our opinion of this matter; and, in delivering it, we shall not pursue the design of any party, but make it evident that all parties have been accessory to the growth of this evil; though I am sensible that this account will fall heavy upon a set of men, in particular, who have of late years claimed the name of the Church of England, though unjustly, if we take her homilies, articles, and the concurring judgment of her renowned bishops, * from the time of the Reformation to Bishop Laud's time, for the standard of her doctrine: I see no reason why we ought not. I premised this to avoid any suspicion of a design to brand the Church of England with being accessory to the growth of Deism. And even in speaking of that set of men, whom I take to be principally guilty, I would not be understood to speak so much of the design of the men, as of the native tendency of their doctrine and practices.

The many groundless, nay, ridiculous pretences to revelation, and bold impostures of the Church of Rome, and of those who have supported that interest—their impudence in obtruding upon the world doctrines contrary to reason and sense, and principles of morality subversive of the whole law of nature—their scandalous endeavours to degrade the scriptures, and weaken their authority, on purpose to bring them into discredit; to make way for the designed advancement of their wild traditions into an equality with them, and to bring the world under a necessity of throwing themselves upon the care and conduct of their pretended infallible guide, though they cannot yet tell us which is he—their gross and discernible hypocrisy in carrying on secular, nay, impious and unjust designs, under the specious pretences of holiness and religion†—their zeal for a form and show of religion, a worship plainly theatrical, while the lives of their Popes, Cardinals, Monks, Nuns,‡ and all their highest pretenders to devotion, have been scandalously lewd, even to a proverb—the immoral morality, atheistical divinity, and abominable practices of the Jesuits, those zealous supporters and strongest props of the Popish interest, but in very deed the worst enemies of mankind, the subverters of all true

* See Bishop of Sarum's explanation of the 39 Articles on Art. 17, p. 168.

† Growth of Deism, p. 5. Reflections on it, p. 8.

‡ See Jesuits' Morals.

piety, morality, and government in the world; —these, I say, together with many other evils of a like nature, every where observable in that church, have been for a very long time too evident and gross to be denied, or hid from persons of any tolerable sagacity, living among them. And by the observation of those and the like evils, continued in, approved, justified, and adhered unto; and the cruelty of that church, in destroying all those who would not receive, by wholesale, all those incredible absurdities, not a few who lived among them, and were unacquainted with the power of religion, that was necessary to engage them cordially to espouse the reformed interest, got their minds leavened with prejudices, and furnished with specious pretences against all revealed religion; which they the more boldly entertained, because they knew it was less criminal to turn Atheist than Protestant, in places where the Popish interest prevailed.

Those prejudices once taken up, daily grew stronger, by the observation of new instances of this sort, and the constancy of those of that communion in acting the same part. And men of wit and learning, who soonest saw into this mystery, and had no inward bonds on them, failed not to hand about and cultivate those pretences to that degree, that many began to own their apostasy, if not openly, yet more covertly.

Not long after the beginning of the last century, so far as I can learn, some in France and Italy began to form a sort of a new party. They called themselves Theists, or Deists, unjustly pretending that they were the only persons who owned the one true God. And hereby they plainly intimated that they had rejected the name of Christ. They rejected all revelation as cheat, priest-craft, and imposture, pretending that there was nothing sincere in religion, save what nature's light taught. However, being generally persons too fond of a present life, and too uncertain about a future, they thought it not meet to put too much to the hazard, for this their pretended religion. It was a refined sort of Paganism which they embraced, and they were pleased to imitate the heathen philosophers, who, whatever their peculiar sentiments were in matters of religion; yet, for peace-sake, they looked on it as safe to follow the mode, and comply with the religious usages, that prevailed in the places where they lived. That which made this party the more considerable was, that it was made up of men who pretended to learning, ingenuity, and polished manners, and who set up for wits. They pretended to write after the copy of the new philosophers, who scorned that philosophical slavery which former ages had been under to Aristotle. They inculcated, that credulity was no less dangerous in matters of religion, than in matters of philosophy. And herein certainly they were not mistaken. But one may justly suspect, that at the same time while they pretended to guard against easiness in believing, they have fallen into the worst credulity, as well as into the most ruinous incredulity; for none is so credulous as an Atheist.

Much about the same time, some novel opinions began to be much entertained in Holland, in matters of religion. The broachers of them, being men learned and diligent, carefully cultivated them, till they were ripened into something very near-akin to plain Socinianism, which is but one remove from Deism. It was not long after this when those

* Clarkson's Practical Divinity of Papists.

new-fangled notions took footing in England, and began to be embraced and countenanced by some topping church men, who, forgetful of their own Articles, Homilies, Subscriptions, and the conduct of their predecessors, carefully maintained, and zealously propagated this new divinity.

I shall not make bold to judge what the designs of those were, who appeared most zealous for those new notions. This is to be left to the judgment of him who "searches the hearts of the children of men," and will bring forth things that are now hid. But there were not a few reasons to suspect that the Jesuits had a considerable hand in disseminating them, and that others were their tools, though it is likely they did not suspect this. The Jesuits vaunted that they had planted the sovereign drug of Arminianism in England, which in time would purge out the Northern Heresy.* This it could not otherwise do, than by shaking men as to all principles of religion. And it is a known maxim, that make men once atheists, it will be easy to turn them Papists. The jealousies many discerning people had of this, were considerably increased, when it was seen with what violence the abettors of this new divinity appeared against the more moderate part of the church of England, as well as the dissenters, upon the account of some ceremonies owned by themselves as indifferent in their own nature: while, at the same time, they expressed a great deal of tenderness, if not respect, to the church of Rome, and made proposals for union with her. But whatever there is as to this, it is certain that this divinity opens a door, and has given encouragement to that apostasy from Christianity, that has since followed, and still increases, under the name of Deism.

This divinity teaches us, that no more is necessary to be believed, in order to salvation, save what is confessed and owned by all that are called Christians. "*Dicunt se non videre unde, aut quo modo, præter pauca ista, quæ apud omnes in confesso sunt, alia plura adhuc necessaria esse ostendi aut elici possit;*"† that is, "They see not how it can be made appear, that besides these few things, which are by all owned, any others are necessary to salvation." Consonantly hereto, they expressly deny any thing to be fundamental, which has been controverted, or afterwards may be so. In a word, they teach that we are not necessarily to believe any thing, save what is evident to us. And that only is to be reckoned evident, which is confessed by all, and to which nothing that has any appearance of truth can be opposed. Now, after this, what is left in Christianity? The divinity, the purity, the perfection, and sufficiency of the Scriptures; the Trinity, deity of Christ, his satisfaction, the whole dispensation of the Spirit, justification by faith alone, and all the articles of the Christian religion, have been and are controverted. None of them therefore is necessary to salvation. Are not men left at liberty, without hazard of their salvation, to renounce all, save what is common to Christianity, with natural religion. And since even some of its most considerable articles about the attributes of God and his providence, future rewards and punishments, have been, or may be controverted, why may we not reckon them unnecessary too? The Deists have borrowed their doctrine of evidence, and opposed it to the Christian religion. One of them tells us, ‡ "If our

* Rushworth's Collect. part I. p. 475. Letter by a Jesuit to the Rector at Brussels, see p. 62. *ibid.* † Remonstr. Apol. Fol. 12. ‡ Oracles of Reason, p. 206. Letter by A. W. to C. Blount.

happiness depends upon our belief, we cannot firmly believe, till our reason be convinced of a supernatural religion." And if the reasons of it were evident, there could be no longer any contention about religion. How little does this differ from that divinity, which tells us, that God is obliged to offer us such arguments to which nothing that has an appearance of truth can be opposed ! And if this be wanting, they are not to be received as articles of faith. Now if, after this, the deists can but offer any thing that has an appearance of truth against Christianity, they are free to reject it in the lump.

This divinity reduces Christianity to mere morality. Nothing else is universally agreed to, if even that be so. "The supposition of sin,"* says one that wore a mitre, "does not bring in any new religion, but only makes new circumstances and names of old things, and requires new helps and advantages to improve our powers, and to encourage our endeavours : and thus the law of grace is nothing but a restitution of the law of nature."

And further, lest we should think this morality, wherein they place the whole of Christianity, owes its being to the agency of the sanctifying Spirit, we are told, "That the Spirit of God, and the grace of Christ, when used as distinct from moral abilities and performances, signify nothing."† And a complaint is made of some, who fill the world "with a buzz and noise of the divine Spirit."‡ Hence many sermons were rather such as became the chair of a philosopher, teaching ethics, than that of one who by office is bound to know and preach nothing save Christ and him crucified. Heathen morality has been substituted in the room of gospel holiness. And ethics by some have been preached instead of the gospel of Christ. And if any complaints were made of this conduct, though by men who preached the necessity of holiness, urged it by all the gospel motives, and carefully practised what they preached in their lives, they were exposed and rejected, and the persons who offered them, were reflected on as enemies to morality ; whereas the plain truth of the case was, they did not complain of men being taught to be moral ; but that they were not taught somewhat more.

After men once were taught that the controverted doctrines of religion were not necessary to salvation, and that all that was necessary thereto, was to be referred to and comprehended under morality, and that there was no need of regeneration, or the sanctifying influences of the spirit of Christ, in order to the performance of our duty, it is easy to see how light the difference was to be accounted between a Christian and an honest moral heathen. And if any small temptation offered, how natural was it for men to judge that the hazard was not great, to step over from Christianity to Deism, which is paganism *a la mode*. And to encourage them to it, it is well known how favourably many used to express themselves of the state of the heathens ; little minding that the Christian religion represents them as "without God, and without Christ, and without hope, children of wrath, and dead in trespasses and sins."

I need not stand to prove that this divinity is nearly allied to Socinianism. It is well known that they reckon the Socinians sound in the fundamentals, and therefore think them in no hazard, provided they live

* S. Park's defence of Eccles. Poli. p. 324. † Idem ibid. p. 343. ‡ Eccles. Polit. p. 57.

morally. Hence men have been emboldened to turn Socinians. And every body may see, by what easy removes one may from Socinianism arrive at Deism. For my part, I can see little difference betwixt the two. The Deist indeed seems the honestest man of the two. He rejects the gospel, and owns that he does so. The other, I mean the Socinian, pretends to retain it, but really rejects it. But I shall not insist any further in discovering the tendency of this new divinity to libertinism and Deism, since others have fully and judiciously done it from the most unquestionable arguments and documents. And more especially, since, in fact, it is evident, that wherever this new divinity has obtained, Socinians and Deists abound, and many who embrace it, daily go over to them; which I take to be the surest evidence, if it be duly circumstantiated, of the tendency of this doctrine, to encourage those opinions, and least liable to any just exception. And perhaps I might add, that few, comparatively very few, who own the contrary doctrine, have gone into this new way, where that divinity has not been entertained.

But to return, whence we have for a little digressed, to the state of religion in England. No sooner were they advanced to power, who had drunk in those opinions, but presently the doctrines that are purely evangelical, by which the apostles converted the world, the reformers promoted and carried on our reformation from popery, and the pious preachers of the church of England did keep somewhat of the life and power of religion amongst their people; these doctrines, I say, began to be decried, justification by the righteousness of Christ, which Luther called "*Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesie*," that redemption that is in him, even the forgiveness of sins through faith in his blood; the mystery of the grace, mercy, and love of God manifested in Christ: the great mystery of godliness; the dispensation of the spirit for conviction, renovation, sanctification, consolation, and edification of the church, by a supply of spiritual gifts and other doctrines of a like tendency, were, upon all occasions, boldly exposed, discredited in the press and in the pulpit. The ministers who dared to avow, and, from a conviction of the truth, the sense of the obligation of their promises and subscriptions to the articles, were sure to have no preferment, nay to be branded with the odious names of Calvinists, Puritans, fanatics, and I know not what.

The doctrines of faith were not regarded as belonging to the foundation of religion. The morality of the Bible was pretended the only thing that was necessary, and as much of the doctrine, as all, even Socinians, Quakers, and all the rest, were agreed in, sufficient. And if any opposed this, though in civil language and by fair arguments, they were sure to be exposed as enemies to morality, although their adversaries durst not put the contest with them on this issue; that he should be reckoned the greatest friend to morality, who was most blameless in his walk, and showed it the greatest practical regard. They could exercise charity, forbearance, and love to a Socinian, who had renounced all the fundamental truths of religion; but none to a poor dissenter, who sincerely believed all the doctrinal articles; nay, even a sober churchman, who could not consent to new unauthorised ceremonies, was become intolerable. So that men, at this time, might, with much more credit and less hazard, turn Socinian, or any thing, than discover the least regard to truths contained in the articles, owned by the most of the reformed churches, and taught by our own reformers. This is too well known to be

denied by any one, who knows how things were carried on at that time and since.*

Further, whereas preachers formerly, in order to engage men to a compliance with the gospel, were wont to press much upon them their guilt, the impossibility of standing before God in their own righteousness, their impotency, their misery by the fall, the necessity of regeneration, illumination, the power of grace to make them willing to comply, and that no man could sincerely call Christ, Lord, and be subject to him practically, save by the Holy Ghost; care was now taken to unteach them all this, and to show them how very little they had lost by the fall, if any thing was lost by it, either in point of light to discern, or power and inclination to practise duty. They were told how great length their own righteousness would go, and that it would do their business; they might safely enough stand before God in it; or if there was any room for Christ's righteousness, it was only to piece out their own where it was wanting. In a word, the people were told what fine persons many of the Heathens were, who knew nothing of illumination, regeneration, or what the Bible was, and how little odds, if any at all, there was betwixt grace and morality.

And, whereas a veneration for the Lord's day was a mean to keep people under some concern about religion, and that day was spent by faithful ministers, in pressing upon the consciences of their people those new contemned gospel truths, to the spoiling of the whole plot; care was taken to discredit and bring it into contempt. Ministers, instead of telling them on that day, that they were naturally inclined to sin, levity, folly, and vanity, were commanded to deal with them as persons too much inclined to be serious, and instead of preaching the gospel, they were required, under the highest pains, to entertain them with a profane book of sports.† And for disobedience many were ejected. And that they might be taught by example as well as precept, a Sunday's evening mask was publicly acted, where were present persons of no mean note.

Moreover, a state game being now to be played, the pulpit, press, and religion, and all, were made basely to truckle to state designs,‡ and to the enslaving of the nations, by advancing the doctrines of passive obedience, non-resistance, and the "divine right" of kings; whereby men of religion were wounded to see the ordinances of Christ prostituted to such projects as were entirely foreign, to say no worse, to the design of their institution: and men of no religion, or who were not fixed about it, were drawn over to think it a mere cheat; and that the design of it was only to carry on secular interests under specious pretences. At length by those means, and some other things which are not of our present consideration, concurring confusions ripened into a civil war, whereby every one was left to speak, write, and live as he pleased.

Many, who intended no hurt, while they, upon honest designs, inquired into, and laid open the faults of the eminent clergy, did unaware furnish loose and atheistical men with pretences against the ministry. And what in truth gave only ground for a dislike of the faulty persons, was received

* Any one that would be satisfied in the truth of this, must peruse the sermons and writings published by that party, of old and of late, and the histories of those times, particularly Rushworth's collection, the speeches of the long parliament, and later writings, and they will find documents more than enough. And they may consult the comment of Honorii Reggii de statu ecclesiæ Anglicanæ.

† Rushworth's Collect. part 2d, vol. I. page 459.

‡ Bishop of Sarum on the articles, Article 7, p. 152.

by many as a just ground of prejudice against the very pastoral office as priestcraft, and all who are clothed with it, as a set of self-designing men.

The body of the people, who had been debauched by the example of a scandalous clergy, and hardened in sin by the intermission of all discipline, which of late had only been exercised against the sober and pious, who could not go into the measures that were then taken, the neglect of painful preaching, the Book of Sports and Pastimes; and who had their heads filled with the airy and self-elating notions of man's ability to good, free-will, universal grace, and the like, and who now, when they much needed the inspection of their faithful pastors, were deprived of it, many of them, by the iniquity of the times, being forced to take sanctuary in foreign nations. The people, I say, by these things turned quite giddy, and broke into numberless sects and parties. Every one who had entertained those giddy notions was zealous, even to madness, for propagating them, and thought himself authorized to plead for them, print them, and preach them. The office of the ministry, that had before been rendered contemptible by the suppression of the best preachers, and the scandalous lives of those who were mainly encouraged, was now made more so, by the intrusion of every bold, ignorant, and assuming enthusiast. The land was filled with books of controversy, stuffed with unsound, offensive and scandalous tenets, which were so multiplied, as they never have been in any nation of the world in so small a compass of time. The generality of the people being, by the neglect of a scandalous ministry, and the discouragement of those who were laborious, drenched in ignorance, were easily shaken by those controversial writings that were disseminated every where, and became an easy prey to every bold sectarian.

Many of the better sort set themselves to oppose these extremes, and, from a detestation of them, were carried, some into one evil, some into another. Whereby the common enemy reaped advantage, and truth suffered even by its defenders. Ministers who desire to be faithful, by the abounding of those errors, were forced to oppose them in public; whereby preaching became less edifying, and disputes increased, to the detriment of religion.

The nation was thus crumbled into parties, in matters both civil and religious, the times turned cloudy and dark: Pretences of religion were dreadfully abused on all hands to subserve other designs. And even the best, both of ministers and people, wanted not their own sad failings, which evil men made the worst use of. The word and providence were used in favour of so many cross opinions and practices, that not a few begun to run into that same extreme, which some in France and Italy had before gone into. And about this time it was that the learned Herbert began to write in favour of deism, of whom we shall have occasion to speak afterwards.

After the restoration, things were so far from being mended, that they grew worse. Lewdness and Atheism were encouraged at the court, which now looked like a little Sodom. The clergy turned no less scandalous, if not more than before. Impiety was, as it were, publicly and with applause acted and taught on the stage, and all serious religion was there exposed and ridiculed. Yea, the pulpits of many became theatres, whereupon men assumed the boldness to ridicule serious godliness, and the gravest matters of religion, such as communion with God, confession of sin, prayer by the spirit, and the whole work of conversion.

Controversal writings were multiplied, and in them grave and serious truths were handled in a jocular way. The scriptures were burlesqued, and the most important truths, under pretence of exposing the dissenters, to the great grief of all good men among them, and in the Church of England, were treated with contempt and scorn. The pulpits were again prostituted to state designs and doctrines; and the great truths of the gospel, in reference to man's misery, and his recovery by Jesus Christ, entirely neglected by many: and discourses of morality came in their place, I mean a morality that has no respect to Christ as its end, author, and the ground of its acceptance with God, which is plain heathenism. The more sober and better part were traduced as enthusiastical, disloyal hypocrites, and I know not what. And sometimes, they, on the other hand, in their own defence, were constrained to lay open the impiety, athiesm and blasphemous boldness of their traducers in their way of management of divine things. And while matters were thus carried betwixt them, careless and indifferent men, especially of the better and most considerable quality, being debanched in their practice, by the licentiousness of the court, the immorality and looseness of the stage, were willing to conform their principles to their practice, for which this state of things gave them a favourable occasion and plausible pretence. Men, whose walk and way looked like any thing of a real regard to religion, they heard so often traduced as hypocrites, fauatics, and I know not what, that they were easily induced to believe them to be such. They who taught them so, on the other hand, by the liberty they assumed in practice, convinced these gentlemen, that whatever their profession was, yet they believed nothing about religion themselves; and therefore it was easy to infer that all was but a cheat. Besides, the popish party, who were sufficiently encouraged, while the sober dissenters of the protestant persuasion were cruelly persecuted, made it their business to promote this unsettledness in matters of religion. They found themselves unable to stand their ground in the way of fair debate, and therefore they craftily set themselves, rather to shake others in their faith, than directly to press them to a compliance with their own sentiments. And it is well known they wrote many books full of sophistry, plainly levelling at this, to bring men to believe nothing; as well knowing that if they were once brought there, they would soon be brought to believe any thing in matters of religion.

On these and the like occasions and pretences, arose this defection from the gospel, which has been nourished by many of the same things which first gave it birth, till it is grown to such strength, as fills all the well-wishers to the interest of religion, with just fears, as to the issue.

Nor was it any wonder that these pretences should take, especially with persons of liberal education and parts, who only were capable of observing those faults, which gave occasion for them; since the generality were prepared for, and inclined to such a defection by a long continuance under the external dispensation of the gospel, without any experience of its power, the prevalent love of lust, that makes men impatient of any thing that may have the least tendency to restrain them from pursuing the gratification thereof; to which we may add the natural enmity of the mind of man against the mystery of the gospel.

There was another thing, which at this time had no small influence; the philosophical writings of Mr Hobbs, Spinoza, and some others of the

same tribe, got, one way or other, into great vogue amongst our young gentry and students, whereby many were poisoned with principles destructive of all true religion and morality.

By those and the like means, things are now come to that pass, that not a few have boldly avowed their apostacy from the Christian religion, not only in conversation, but in print. They disown the name of Christ, call themselves Deists, and glory in that name. They have published many writings reflecting on the scriptures, and justifying themselves in rejecting them. And we have just reason to suspect that, besides those who do avow their principles, who are perhaps as numerous in these lands, as any where else, there are many, who yet are ashamed to speak it out, who bear them good-will, and who want only a little more time to harden themselves against the odium that this way goes under, and a fair occasion of throwing off the mask, which they yet think meet to retain. Of this we have many indications.

Many have assumed an unaccountable boldness, in treating things sacred and serious too freely in writing and conversation. They make bold to jest upon the scriptures, and upon every occasion to traverse them. When once men have gone this length, the veneration due to that blessed book is gone, and they are in a fair way to reject it. Others have made great advances to this defection, by disseminating and entertaining reproaches against a standing ministry. It is known what contempt has been cast upon this order of men, whom God hath intrusted with the gospel dispensation, and who by office are obliged to maintain its honour. If this order of men fall under that general contempt, which some do their utmost to bring them to, religion cannot long maintain its station amongst us; when the principal means of the Lord's appointment are laid aside or rendered useless, no other means will avail.

And hereon further, there follows a neglect of attendance on the ministry of the word which the Lord has appointed for the edification of the church, and establishing people in the faith of the truth he has revealed to us therein. When this once begins to be neglected, men will soon turn sceptical and unconcerned about religion.

And further, it is very observable, that many are strengthened in this neglect, by principles calculated for this purpose, while the whole efficacy of preaching is made to depend not on the blessing of Christ, whose institution it is, or the influences of his Spirit, which he has promised for setting it home on the hearers for their conviction, conversion, and edification; but on the abilities and address of the preachers. It is natural to conclude, that it is better to stay at home and read some book, than to go to sermon, if the preacher is not of uncommon abilities. Which is a principle avowed by many, and their practice suits their principles.

Besides, which is the true spring of the former, I am afraid ignorance of the nature of revealed religion, the design of its institutions, and all its principal concerns, is become more common than is usually observed, even amongst men of liberal education and the best quality. And hence many of them entertain notions inconsistent with their own religion, at first out of ignorance, and afterwards think themselves in honour engaged to defend them, although destructive to the religion they profess.

Add to all this, that profanity in practice has, like a deluge, overspread those lands: and where this once takes place, love to sin never fails to engage men to those principles, which may countenance them in the

courses they love, and design to cleave to. This seems plainly to be the state of matters with us at present: and we see but little appearance of any redress. The infection spreads, and many are daily carried off by it both in England and Scotland. Though it must be owned that Scotland, as yet, is less tainted with that poison: but those of this nation have no reason to be secure, since many are infected, and more are in a forwardness to it, than is commonly thought.

Having given this short, but, I conceive, true account of the rise and growth of deism, it now remains that we consider what these principles are which they maintain. The deists, although they are not perfectly one amongst themselves, yet do agree in two things. 1. They all reject revealed religion, and plainly maintain that all pretences to revelation are vain, cheat, and imposture. 2. They all maintain that natural religion is sufficient to answer all the great ends of religion, and the only rule whereby all our religious practices are to be squared. The first of these assertions only tells what their religion is not, and expresses their opposition to all revelation, particularly to christianity, which has of late been worthily defended and asserted by many against all their objections; and I shall not much insist in adding to what they have written to such excellent purpose. The second tells us what their religion is, and it is this chiefly we design in the following pages to debate with them. They have long been upon the offensive part, which is more easy. We design now to put them on the defensive.

They who call themselves deists, although they thus far agree, yet are not all of one sort. I find them by one of their own number classed into two sorts—*mortal* and *immortal*.*

The *immortal* are they who maintain a future state. The *mortal*, they who deny one. It is with the first we are principally concerned; yet I shall in the subsequent chapter offer a few things with respect to the *mortal* deists. And in what I have to say of them, I shall be very short; because, I conceive, what has already been offered, in the introduction, against this sort of men, might almost supersede any further discourse about them.

CHAP. II.

Mortal Deists who, and what judgment to be made of them and their Sentiments.

THE *mortal* deists, who also are called nominal deists, denying a future state, are, in effect, mere atheists. This perhaps some may think a harsh judgment; but yet it is such as the deists themselves, who are on the other side, will allow.

One who owns himself a deist, thus expresses his mind. “We do believe, that there is an infinitely powerful, wise, and good God, who superintends the actions of mankind, in order to retribute to every one according to their deserts; Neither are we to boggle at this creed; for if we do not stick to it, we ruin the foundation of all human happiness,

* Oracles of Reason. p. 99.

and are, in effect, no better than mere atheists."* A further account of this sort of men we have given us by one, whom any may judge capable enough for it, who considers his way of writing, and the account he gives of himself. "I have observed some," says he, "who pretend themselves deists, that they are men of loose and sensual lives; and I make no wonder that they dislike the Christian doctrine of self-denial, and the severe threatenings against wilful sinners. You may be sure they will not allege this reason: but having read Spinoza and Hobbes, and being taught to laugh at the story of Balaam's ass, and Samson's locks, they proceed to ridicule the reality of all miracle and revelation. I have conversed with several of this temper, but could never get any of them serious enough to debate the reality of revelation: but a witty jest, and t'other glass, put an end to all further consideration."† These are mere sceptics and practical atheists, rather than real deists.

Now, it is to no purpose to debate with men of this temper. If they will listen to arguments, many have said enough, if not to convince them,—for I know it is not an easy matter to convince some men,—yet to stop their mouths; and therefore I shall not offer any arguments: only I shall lay down a few clear principles, and from them draw an inference or two, which will make it evident, what judgment we are to make of this sort of men.

The principles I take for incontrovertible are these which follow: 1. He deserves not the name of a man, who acts not rationally, knowing what he does, and to what end. 2. No action which contributes not, at least in appearance, to man's happiness is worthy of him. 3. The happiness of a present life, which is all that these gentlemen allow, consists in the enjoyment of things agreeable to our nature; and freedom from those which are repugnant to it. 4. Man's nature is such, that his felicity depends not only on these things which at present he has or wants; but likewise on what is past, and what is future, a prospect of the one, and reflection on the other, according as they are more or less agreeable, exceedingly increasing his pleasure or pain. 5. The hopes of obtaining hereafter the good we at present want, and of being freed from evils we suffer by, mightily enhances the pleasure of what we possess, and always the trouble that arises from incumbent evils. 6. So strong is the desire every one finds in himself of a continuation in being, that the thoughts of annihilation are rendered very terrible and irksome. 7. The practice of virtue, as it is the most probable mean of attaining future happiness, if any such state be, so it is that which tends most to perfect and advance man's nature; and so must give the most solid and durable pleasure, even here in this life. 8. It is malicious to do what tends to the obstructing another's happiness, when it cannot further one's own. Few men will question any of those, and if any do, it is not worth while to debate with him. Now from these we may see,

1. It would contribute much to the present felicity of those gentlemen to believe, be it true or false, that there is a future state of happiness; since the hopes of immutable and endless bliss would be a notable antidote against the uneasiness of mind, that arises not only from

* Letter to the deists, p. 125.

† Growth of deism, p. 5.

incumbent evils, but also from those we fear, and the inconstancy of our short-lived enjoyments.

2. The generality of mankind, especially where Christianity obtains, being already possessed of the prospect of future happiness, which supports them under present evils, arms them against the troublesome reflections on past troubles, and fears of the future: and moreover animates them in the practice of those actions whereby not only their own good, but that of the societies wherein they live, is signally promoted. All attempts to rob them of this hope are highly malicious, and import no less than a conspiracy against the happiness of mankind, and the good of the society wherein they live; and therefore we may say assuredly, that as those *mortal* deists are much incommoded by their own opinion; so their attempts for its propagation, must be looked on, as proceeding from no good design to the rest of mankind.

Here perhaps some of them may say, that this opinion tends to liberate a great part of mankind from the disquieting fears of future misery. To this I answer, 1. I believe it true, that their fears of future misery are uneasy to them, as they have but little hope of future felicity. Their way of living allows them none. But these fears proceed from conscience of guilt, and are the genuine results of actions, equally destructive to the actors, and the interest of the rest of mankind. 2. These fears have their use, and serve to deter from such evils as are ruining to the persons who commit them, and human society. 3. While this opinion liberates a few of the worst of men from those fears, which are a part of the just punishment of their villainies; it emboldens them to run on in these evils, which ruin themselves and others; and dispirits and discourages the only useful part of mankind by filling them with dismal thoughts of annihilation. 4. Nor can all that the deists are able to do, liberate themselves or mankind from those fears. The utmost that they can pretend, with any show of reason, is, that we have not ground to believe such a state. Will this make us sure that there is none? But of this we have said enough in the introduction.

By what has been said, it is evident, what judgment we are to make of this sort of deists. Their lives, writings, and death, show them to be mere atheists. Vaninus, when first he appeared and wrote his *Amphitheatrum Providentiæ Divinæ*, set out for such a one that believed a God, but at length spoke out plainly that he believed none, and was deservedly burnt for atheism at Thoulouse, April 9, 1619.* He confessed there were twelve of them that parted in company from Naples to teach their doctrine in all the provinces of Europe. Uriel Accosta wrote for this opinion, as himself tells us in his *Exemplar Vitæ Humanæ*, which is subjoined to Limburg's conference with Orobius the Jew. His last action tells us, what man he was. After he had made a vain attempt to shoot his brother, he discharged a pistol in his own breast. This fell out about the twentieth or thirtieth year of the last century.† So they live, and so they die.

Were this our design, or if we saw any need of it, we might give such an account of the principles, practices, and tragical exits of not a

* Great Geographical Dictionary.

† Limburgi præfatio et responsum. Uriel Accostæ Libro.

few of this sort of persons, as would be sufficient to deter the sober from following them. But what has been said is sufficient to discover the destructive tendency of their prime opinion. And further we shall not concern ourselves with them, but go on to that which is mainly intended in this discourse.

CHAP. III.

Wherein the controversy betwixt us and the immortal deists is stated and cleared.

THE *immortal* deists, who own a future state, are the only persons with whom it is worth while to dispute this point about the sufficiency of natural religion. Before we offer any arguments on this head, it is necessary, that we state the question clearly: and it is the more necessary that none of the deists have had the courage or honesty to do it. And here in the entry we shall lay down some things, which we think are not to be controverted on this occasion. And we shall, after these concessions are made, inquire what still remains in debate.

I. We look on it as certain, that all the world, in all ages, have been possessed of some notion of a God, of some power above them, on whom more or less they did depend; and to whom, on this account, some respect is due. This heathens have observed. Cicero, amongst others, hath long since told us, "that there is no nation so barbarous that owns not some god, that has not some anticipations or impressions from the nature of a god."* Nor is this any more, than what we are told, Rom. i. 19, 20, &c., that the Gentiles have some notions of truth concerning God, which they hold in unrighteousness; that God, partly by erecting a tribunal in their own breasts, which they cannot decline, though they never so much would, and partly by presenting to their eyes those visible works that bear a lively impress of his invisible power and Godhead, hath, as it were, forced upon them the knowledge of some part of that, which the apostle calls *γνωστων του Θεου*, or that which may be known of God. Whence they all in some measure knew God, though they glorified him not as God.

The stories some have told us of nations that have no notion of a god, upon search are found false. And for some lewd persons, who have pretended to a settled persuasion, they are not to be credited. We have sufficient reason to look on them as liars, or at least not to admit them as witnesses in this case.

II. I do think that the knowledge of some of the more obvious laws of nature, and their obligation, hath universally obtained.† The Gentiles, all of them, do by nature those things, that is, the material part of those duties, which the law of nature enjoins; which shows the work of the law, or some part of it, at least, to be written in their hearts, since they do some things it enjoins. I do not think that this

* Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. I.

† I inquire not whether they were acquainted with the proper and true grounds of the obligation of those laws they owned obligatory.

writing of the law imports innate ideas, or innate actual knowledge, which Mr Locke hath been at so much pains to disprove, with what success I inquire not now. Some do think, that while he grants the self-evidence of a natural propensity of our thoughts, toward some notions, which others call innate, he grants all that the more judicious intend by that expression.* Others think that Mr Locke's arguments conclude only the improbability of innate ideas, and that they are to be rejected, rather for want of evidence for them, than for the strength of what is said against them:† but whatever there is as to this, neither the apostle's scope nor words oblige us to maintain them. What is intended may be reduced to two assertions, viz. that men are born with such faculties, which cannot, after they are capable of exercising them, but admit the obligation and binding force of some, at least, of the laws of nature, when they are fairly offered to their thoughts: and that man is so stated, that he cannot miss occasions of thinking of or coming to the knowledge of those laws of nature.

III. It is unquestionable, and has been sufficiently attested by the nations, and even by some of the worst of them, that man has a conscience that sometimes drags the greatest and most obstinate offenders, to its tribunal in their own breasts, accuses them, condemns them, and in some sort executes the sentence against them for their counteracting known duty, how little soever they know.

IV. We own that those laws of nature, which are of absolute necessity to the support of government and order in the world, and the maintenance of human society, are, in a good measure, knowable by the light of nature, and have been generally known.

V. We willingly admit that, what by tradition, what by the improvement of nature's light, many of the wiser heathens have come to know and express many things excellently, as to the nature of God, man's duty, the corruption of nature, a future state, &c., and some of them have lived nearer up to the knowledge they had than others: for which they are highly to be commended, and I do not grudge them their due praise.

VI. I look on it as certain, that the light of nature, had it been duly improv'd, might have carried them in these things, and others of the like nature, further than ever any went.

But after all these things are granted, the question concerning the sufficiency of natural religion, remains untouched. For clearing this, it is further to be observed, that, when we speak of the sufficiency of natural religion, or those notices of God, and the way of worshipping him, which are attainable by the mere light of nature, without revelation, we consider it as a mean in order to some end. For by sufficiency is meant, that aptitude of a mean for compassing some end, that infers a necessary connection betwixt the due use, that is, such an use of the mean, as the person to whom it is said to be sufficient, is capable to make of it, and the attainment of the end. Now natural religion under this consideration may be asserted sufficient or not, according as it is looked at with respect to one end, or another: for it is useful to several purposes, and has a respect to several ends.

* Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, book i. ch. 4, § 11.

† Becconsall of Natural Religion, ch. 6, § 1, 2.

I. * It may be considered with respect to human society, upon which religion has a considerable influence. There could never possibly be any government settled amongst atheists, or those who pay no respect to a deity. "Remove God once out of heaven, and there will never be any gods upon earth. If man's nature had not something of subjection in it to a supreme being above him, and inherent principles obliging him how to behave himself toward God, and toward the rest of the world, government could have never been introduced, nor thought of. Nor can there be the least mutual security between governors and governed, where no God is admitted. For it is an acknowledging of God, in his supreme judgment over the world, that is the ground of an oath; and upon which the validity of all human engagements do depend," says an excellent person. If the question concerned this end, we might own natural religion some way sufficient to be a foundation for human society, and some order and government in the world: for it is in fact evident, that where revelation has been wanting, there have been several well formed governments. Though still it must be said, that they were obliged to tradition for many things that were of use, and to have recourse to pretended revelation, where the real was wanting; which shows revelation necessary, if not to the being, yet to the well-being of human society.†

II. Natural religion may be considered in its subserviency to God's moral government of the world; and with respect to this, it has several considerable uses, that I cannot enter upon the detail of. It is the measure of God's judicial proceedings, with respect to those of mankind, who want revelation; and as to this, there is one thing that is usually observed, that it is sufficient to justify God in punishing sinners, that God sometimes, even here in time, punishes offenders, and, by the forebodings of their consciences, gives them dreadful presages of a progress in his severity, against them, after this life, cannot well be denied. Now certainly there must be some measure, whereby God proceeds in this matter. Where there is no law there is no transgression. Punishments cannot be inflicted, but for the transgression, and according to the tenor of a law. And this law, if it is holy, just, and good, in its precepts, and equal in its sanction, is not only the measure whereby the governor proceeds in punishing offenders; but that which justifies him in the punishment of them. It is needless to speak of the grant of rewards in this case, because, with respect to them, not only justice, but grace and bounty have place, which are not astricted to any such nice measures in the dispensation of favours, as justice is in execution of punishments. Now if natural religion is considered with respect to this end, we say it is sufficient to justify God, and fully clear him from any imputation of injustice or cruelty; whatever punishments he may, either in time or after time, inflict upon mankind, who want revelation. There are none of them come to age,—1. Who have not fallen short of knowing many duties, which they might have known. 2. Who have not omitted many duties, which they knew themselves obliged to. And, 3. Who have not done what they knew they ought not to have done, and might have forborne. If these three are made out,

* S. Ch. Wolfeley Unreas. of Atheism, page 152, &c.

† See Amyrald of Relig. part 2. cap. 8.

as no doubt they may be against all men. I do not see what reason any will have to implead God either of hardship or injustice.

There are, I know, who think it very hard, that those natural notices of God and religion, should be sufficient to justify God in adjudging those, who counteract them, to future and eternal punishments, while yet such an attendance to, and compliance with them as men are capable of, in their present circumstances, is not sufficient to entitle us to eternal rewards. But if, in this matter, any injustice is charged upon God, who shall manage the plea? Shall they who transgress and contravene those notices do it? But what injustice meet they with, if they are condemned for not knowing what they might have known? Not doing what they were obliged to do, and were able to do? And for doing what they might and should have forborne? If all these may be laid to their charge, though there were no more, what have they to say for themselves or against God? They sure have no reason to complain. If any have reason to complain, it must be they who have walked up to the natural notices of God. But where is there any such? We may spare our vindication till such a one be found. Nor is it easy to prove that man's obedience, though perfect, must necessarily entitle to eternal felicity. And he who shall undertake to charge God with injustice upon the account of such a sentence, as that we now speak of, will not find it easy to make good his accusation.

Were the difficulty thus moulded, that it is hard to pretend that those natural notices of God are sufficient to justify God in condemning the transgressors of them to future punishments, while punctual compliance with them is not sufficient to save those who yield this obedience, from those punishments which the contraveners are liable to for their transgression. Though it were thus moulded, it would be a hard task to make good such a charge. But I am not concerned in it: nor are any who judge the persons who have gone furthest in this compliance, liable upon other accounts, because they still own their compliance, so far available to them, as to save them from those degrees of wrath, which deeper guilt would have inferred.

3. Other ends there are, with respect to which natural religion may be considered, which I shall pass without naming, and shall only make mention of that which we are concerned in, and is aimed at in the present controversy, and that is, the future happiness of man in the enjoyment of God. This certainly is the supreme and ultimate end of religion with respect to man himself. For that the glory of God is the chief end absolutely, and must, in all respects, have the preference, I place beyond debate.

Now it is as to this end, that the question about the sufficiency of natural religion is principally moved. And the question, in short, amounts to this, whether the notices of God and religion, which all men by the light of nature have, or at least by the mere improvement of their natural abilities without revelation, may have, are sufficient to direct them in the way to eternal blessedness, satisfy them that such a state is attainable, and point out the way how it is to be attained; and whether by that practicable compliance with those notices, which man in his present state is capable of, he may certainly attain to acceptance with God, please him, and obtain this eternal happiness in the enjoyment of him? The deists are for the affirmative; as we shall

afterwards make appear, when we consider their opinions more particularly.

But before we proceed to offer arguments, it will be needful to branch this question into several particulars that are included in it, that we may the better conceive of, and take up the import of it, and how much is included and wrapt up in this assertion. The question, which we have proposed in general, may be turned into those five subordinate queries:—

I. “Whether by the mere light of nature we can discover an eternal state of happiness, and know that this is attainable.” Unless this is done, nothing in matters of religion is done. It is impossible that the light of nature can give any directions as to the means of attaining future happiness, if it cannot satisfy us, that there is such a state.

II. “Whether men, left to the conduct of the mere light of nature, can certainly discover and find out the way of attaining it.” That is, whether by the light of nature we can know and find out all that is required of us, in way of duty, in order to our eternal felicity? If the affirmative is chosen, it must be made appear by nature’s light, what duties are absolutely necessary to this purpose, that those which are prescribed are indeed duties, that they are all that are necessary in order to the attainment of the end, if they are complied with. Although we should have it never so clearly made out that there is a future state of happiness, yet if we are left at an utter loss as to the means of attaining it, we are no better for the discovery.

III. “Whether the light of nature gives such a full, a certain discovery of both these as the case seems to require?” Considering what a case man at present is in, to hope for an eternity of happiness, is to look very high: and any man, who, in his present circumstances, shall entertain such an expectation, on mere surmises and suspicions, may be reproached by the world, and his own heart, as a fool. To keep a man up in the steady impression and expectation of so great things, conjectures, suppositions, probabilities, and confused general hints, are not sufficient. Again, there are great difficulties to be surmounted in the way to this blessedness, which are obvious and certain. Sensible losses are sometimes to be sustained, sensible pains to be undergone, and sensible dangers to be looked in the face. Now the question is, whether is there such a clear and certain knowledge of these attainable as the importance of the case, the stress that is to be laid on them, and the dangers that are to be encountered for them requires? Certain it is, it will not be such notices as most please themselves with, that will be able to answer this end.

IV. “Whether the evidence of the attainableness of a future state of happiness, and of the way to it, is such as suits the capacities of all concerned?” Every man has a concernment in this matter. The deists inquire after a religion that is able to save all, whereof every man, if he but please, may have the eternal advantage. Now then the question is, whether the case is so stated, as that every man, who is in earnest, if he has but the use of reason, however shallow his capacity is, how great soever his inevitable entanglements and hinderances from close application are, may attain to this certainty, about this end and the way to it? For it must be allowed that there is a vast difference among men as to capacity. Men are no more of one measure

in point of intellectual abilities, than in stature. That may be out of the reach of one, which another may easily attain to. Now, may as much be certainly known by the meanest capacity as is necessary for him to know. Again, all men have not alike leisure. That may be impossible to me, if I am a poor man, obliged to work hard to earn my own and family's bread, which would not be so if I had leisure and opportunity to follow my studies. Now, if these discoveries, both as to their truth, certainty, and suitableness, are not such as the meanest, notwithstanding of any inevitable hinderances he may be under, may reach, they will not answer the end.

V. "Whether," supposing all the former, "every man, however surrounded with temptations, and inveigled with corrupt inclinations, or other hinderances which he cannot avoid, is yet able without any supply of supernatural strength to comply so far with all those duties, as is absolutely needful in order to obtain this eternal happiness?" Whatever our knowledge is, we are not the better for it, unless we are able to yield a practical compliance.

The deists have the affirmative of all these questions to make good. How they acquit themselves in this, we shall see afterwards. The task, as any one may see, is sufficiently difficult. And I do not know, that any one of them who has yet wrote, hath given any evidence that they understood the state of the question in its full extent. They huddle it up in the dark, that the weakness of their proofs may not appear. And perhaps they are not willing to apply their thoughts so closely to the subject as is requisite, in order to take up the true state of the controversy. The more remiss and careless they have been this way, we had so much the more to do to state the question truly betwixt us and them. And having done this, we shall next proceed to make good our part of it. A negative is not easily proven, which puts us at some loss. It has been denied that it can in some cases be proven. But we hope in this case we are able to offer such reasons, as will justify us in holding the negative in this debate. And we shall see next whether they are able to demonstrate the affirmative, and offer as good reasons for it, as we shall give against it. And it is but reason that they should offer better in a matter of so great concern.

CHAP. IV.

Proving the insufficiency of natural religion from the insufficiency of its discoveries of a Deity.

THOUGH it belongs to the asserters of the sufficiency of natural religion to justify by argument their assertion, and we who are upon the negative might supersede any further debate, until such time as we see how they can acquit themselves here; yet truth, not triumph, being the design of our engaging in the contest, that none may think we are without reason in our denial, and that we put them upon the proof, only to difficult them, we shall now by some arguments endeavour to evince the insufficiency of natural religion.

The first argument I shall improve to this purpose, is deduced from

the insufficiency of those discoveries, which the light of nature is able to make of God. Nothing is more plain than this, that religion is founded upon the knowledge of the Deity; and that our regard for him will be answerable to the knowledge we have of him. That religion therefore which is defective here, is lame with a witness: and if the light of nature cannot afford such notices of the Deity, as are sufficient or necessary to beget and maintain religion amongst men, then it can never with any rational man be allowed sufficient to direct men in religion.

Now, for clearing this argument, several things are to be discoursed. And first of all it is requisite, that we state such a notion of religion in general, as may be allowed to pass with all, who are or can reasonably be supposed competent judges in such matters. Religion then in general, may be justly said to import that veneration, respect, or regard, which is due from the rational creature in his whole course or life, to the supreme supremely excellent Being, his creator, preserver, lord or governor, and benefactor.

The actions of the rational creature which may come under the notion of religion, are of two sorts. Some of them do directly, properly, and immediately import a regard or respect to God as their end; which they are immediately and properly designed to express. Such acts are called acts of worship. And religion is more eminently thought to consist in these, and that not without reason. Yea, by some it is wholly and against all reason confined to them, and circumscribed within those bounds. Again, there are other actions, which though they have other more proper, direct, and immediate ends, on account whereof they undergo various denominations; yet they also are or may be, and certainly should be subordinate to that which, though it is not the proper, most immediate, and distinguishing end of these actions, yet is the common and ultimate end at which all a man's actions should be levelled. Now all the actions of a rational creature which are of this last sort, as referred to a Deity, and importing somewhat of religion, may be termed acts of moral obedience. In so far they are religious, and come within the compass of our consideration, as they express any respect to God: and they express and import regard to God, in as far as they quadrate with the moral law, which is the instrument of God's moral government of the world: and therefore if they are right and agreeable to this rule, they may be termed acts of moral obedience, to distinguish them from those acts which are solely and more strictly religious, and are called acts of worship. But to speak somewhat more particularly of this regard that is due to God, it is as evident as any thing can, that it must be,

I. In its formal nature, different from that respect which we may allowably pay to any creature, that is, it must be given on accounts no way common to him with any of the creatures; but on account of those distinguishing excellencies which are his incommunicable glory. None can reasonably deny this, since it must be allowed by all, that religious respect due to God and civil respect due to creatures are different, by the grounds whereon the respect to the one or other is paid. Now the grounds whereon this homage is due unto the Deity, are the supremely, nay, infinite excellency of his nature and perfections, and his indisputable, supreme, absolute, and indepen-

dent sovereignty over all his creatures, which stands eternally firm and unshaken, as being supported by that supereminency of his excellency, his creation, preservation, and benefits. Now none of these grounds are in any degree communicable to the creature: and so to talk of a religious worship due to the creature, is to speak nonsense with a witness.

II. This veneration we give to God must be intensively, or, as to degree, not only superior to that which we give to any creature, but even supreme. It is not enough, that we love God on accounts peculiar to him; but we must love him with a love superior to that which we give any creature, and answerable to those accounts, whereon we do love him; and the like may be said as to other instances. There is no need of insisting on the proof of this. Would our king be pleased, if we paid him no more respect, than we do his servant? Is the distance betwixt God and the highest creature less considerable, than that which is betwixt a king and his meanest subject? Nay, is it not infinitely more? How can it then reasonably be expected that the same degree of respect we pay to the creatures, will find acceptance, or answer the duty we owe to the glorious and ever blessed LORD GOD?

III. This veneration must be extensively superior to that payed to any of the creatures. Our regard to the deity must not be confined to one sort of our actions; those, for instance, which are religious in a strict sense, or more plainly, acts of worship. But it must run through every action of our life, inward and outward. Every action is a dependent of God's, and owes him homage. It is otherwise with men; for to one sort of men, we may owe respect, in one sort of our actions, and owe them none in another. A child, in filial duties, owes his father respect, as a subject he owes his governor reverence, and so of other instances of a like nature: but to no one creature is he, in all respects, subject, or obliged by every action to express any regard: and the reason is plain, he is subject to none of them in all respects, wherein he is capable of acting. But, with respect to God, the matter is quite otherwise: whatever he has, is from God, and to him he is in all respects subject; on him he every way depends. The power your father has over you, he derives from God, and it is God that binds on you the duties you are to pay your father: and therefore God is to be owned as supreme, even in every act of duty, you perform to your father, your king, your neighbour, or yourselves: for you are in all respects his, while ye are subordinate on various accounts to others; yet still God is in every regard Supreme and Sovereign Lord and Disposer of you and your actions, and therefore a regard you owe him, in every thing you think, speak, or do. I think this plain enough.

I hope this account of the nature of religion in general, will not be found liable to any considerable exceptions, it being no other, than such as the first view of the nature of the thing offers to any that seriously considers it. And from this account it is evident, "that religion is founded on the knowledge of a deity." A blind devotion that is begotten and maintained either by profound ignorance of God, or confused notions of him, answers neither man's nature, which is rational, and requires that he proceed in all his actions, especially those of most moment, rationally—that is, with knowledge, and willingness; nor will it obtain acceptance, as that which answers his duty, whereby he is

obliged to serve God with the best and in the highest way his faculties admit him. The contrary supposition of papists is a scandalous reproach to the nature, both of God and man : and an engine suited only unto the selfish design of the villanous priests, who, that they may have the conduct of men's souls, and so the management of their estates, have endeavoured to hoodwink man, and make him brutish, where he should be most rational ; and that they may have the best, they make him present God with the blind and the lame, which his soul abhors.

This being in general clear, "that the knowledge of God is the foundation of all acceptable religion," it is now proper to inquire what discoveries of God are requisite to bring man to such a religion, as has been above described, and to keep him up in the practice of it. Now if we look seriously into this matter, I think we may lay down the following positions, as clear beyond rational contradiction.

I. That a particular knowledge of God is requisite to this purpose, to beget and maintain this reverence for the Deity, which is his undoubted due. It is not enough that we have some general notions, however extensive. To conceive of God in the general, that he is the best and greatest of beings, is not enough. The reason is obvious : we must have, in every sort of actions, nay, in each particular action, that knowledge which may influence and guide us to that respect which is due to him, in that sort of actions, or that particular one ; but this general notion, having no more respect to one than another, will not do. It directs us no more in one than another, unless the particulars that are comprehended under that general be explained to, and understood by the actor.

II. That knowledge which will answer the end, must be large and comprehensive. This religion is not to be confined to one particular sort of actions, but to run through all, and therefore there must be a knowledge, not merely of one or two perfections of the divine nature, but of all : Not simply, as if God were to be comprehended, but of all those perfections and prerogatives of God, which require our regard in our particular actions, in so far as they are the ground of our veneration.

As for instance, to engage to trust God, I must know his power, his care, and knowledge : to engage me to pray to him, I must be persuaded of his knowledge, of his willingness and power to assist me in the suit I put up. To engage me to love him, I must know the amiableness of his perfections ; to engage me to pay him obedience, I must know his authority, the laws he has stampt it on, and that he has fixed a law to these particular actions, either more general or more special. Whence it being evident, that different actions require different views of God in order to their regulations ; and all a man's actions being under rule, there must be a large and comprehensive knowledge of God to guide him in his whole course.

III. It being no less than a universal religion that is to be sought after, the discoveries of God, wherein it must be founded, must be plain to the capacities of all mankind ; and that both as to the truth of their discoveries and their use. It is certain that all men are no more of the same measure of understanding, than they are in stature. However important the discovery is, if it is above my reach, it is all one to me as if it were not discovered at all. To tell me of such a thing, but it is in the clouds, is to amuse and not to instruct me. There may

indeed, supposing a universal religion be somewhat of difference as to knowledge allowed, as to some of the concernments of this religion, to persons of more capacity and industry, and who have more time; but if it is calculated for the good of all mankind, the discoveries must be such, as all who are concerned may reach, as to all its essentials; for the meanest have as much concernment in them as the greatest.

IV. It is most evident, that these discoveries must be certain, or come recommended by such evidence as may be convincing and satisfying to every mind. Conjectural discoveries, or surmises of these things built upon airy and subtle speculations, are not firm enough to establish such a persuasion of truth in the soul, as may be able to influence to this universal regard, in despite of the strongest inward bias and of outward rubs.

V. The evidence of these things must be abiding; such as may be able to keep up the soul in a constant adherence to duty. It is not one day that man is to obey, but always; and therefore these discoveries must lie so open to the mind at all times, as that the soul may by them be constantly kept up in its adherence to duty. If from any external or internal cause, there may arise such obstructions as may for one day keep man from those discoveries, or the advantage of them; he may ruin, nay, must ruin himself by failing in his duty; or at least, if he is not ruined, he is laid open to it.

VI. Upon the whole it appears, that to found natural religion, or to introduce and maintain among men that regard which is due to the Deity, there is requisite such a large, comprehensive, certain, plain, and abiding discovery, as may have sufficient force to influence to a compliance with his duty in all instances.

Thus far matters seem to be carried on with sufficient evidence. We are now come to that which seems to be the principal hinge, whereon the whole controversy about the sufficiency of natural religion turns; in so far at least, as it is to be determined by this argument. Now this is, whether the light of nature can indeed afford such discoveries of God, as are evinced necessary for the support of religion? If it cannot, then it is found insufficient; if it can, then natural religion is thus far acquitted from the charge laid against it. Now to attempt the decision of this question successfully, it is necessary that we state it right. It is not then the question, whether in nature there is sufficient objective light, as the schools barbarously speak, that is, whether in the works of creation and providence, which lie open to our view, or are the objects of our contemplation, there are such prints of God, which if they were all fully understood by us, are sufficient to this purpose? For the question is not concerning the works of God without us, but concerning us. The plain question is this, "Whether man can from those works of God alone, without help of revelation, obtain such a knowledge of God, as is sufficient to the purpose mentioned?" Now the question being concerning our power, or rather the extent of our power, I know but four ways that can be thought upon to come to a point about it: either,

1. By divine revelation we may be informed what the light of nature unassisted can do. We would willingly put the matter on this issue: our adversaries will not; so we shall leave it. Or,

2. Some apprehend that the way to decide this, is, to take our

measures from the nature of God ; and to inquire, when God was to make or did frame man, with what powers it was proper for him to endue him ? Or, with what extent of power, considering the infinite wisdom, goodness, and power of the Creator. This way the deists would go. But, 1. It seems a little presumptuous for us to prescribe or measure what was fit for God to do, by what appears to us fit to have been done. For when we have soared as high as we can, yet we must fall down again ; for God's counsels are too deep for us, and if we should think this or that fit for God, yet he having a more full view of things, may think quite the contrary ; and thus all that we can come to here in this way, is but a weak and presumptuous conjecture. 2. If in fact, what we think fit, or conjecture fit for God to have done, it be evident that God has not done, that he has given no such power or extent of it, as we judge necessary, our judgment is not only weakly founded, but plainly false ; yea, and impious likewise ; for if God has done otherwise, it is certain the way we prescribed was not best, nor can we hold by our own apprehension, whatever shows it is built on, without an implicit charge of folly against God. 3. Whatever we may pretend the wisdom of God requires to be done for, or given to man, if by no divine act, there is any evidence that he has so done, though there be no proof of his having done the contrary, yet it weakens the evidence of all we can say, if the thing is such in its nature, as would be known by experience, if existent ; because, in that case, the whole stress of our argument leans upon a supposition that we are capable of judging of the wisdom of God, while it is certain, we have not all those circumstances under our view which may make it really fit to act this way, rather than that, or that way rather than this, which on the other hand he certainly has. This way then we cannot decide the case.

3. We may immediately perhaps judge of the extent of man's ability in this sort, by a direct inquiry into the nature of the powers. But this way is as uncertain as the former ; for there is no agreement amongst the most judicious about the nature of those powers ; without endless controversies. And all that are really judicious own such darkness in this matter, that will not allow them to pretend themselves capable to decide the question this way. It is little we know of the nature, or powers, or actings of spirits : nor do I believe that ever any person that understands, will pretend to decide the controversy this way. Wherefore,

4. We must upon the whole give over the business, or inquire into the extent of our ability by experience ; and judge what man can do by what he has done. If not one has made sufficient discoveries of God, it is rash to say that any one can by the mere light of nature make them : more especially it will appear so, if we consider that all mankind must be pretended equally capable of these discoveries, which concern their own practice. It is strange to pretend that all are capable of doing that which none has done. Further, these discoveries are not of that sort that may be sufficient to answer their end, if one in one age shall make some steps toward them, and another afterwards improve them : but it is necessary that every one in every age, and at every period of his life, have exact acquaintance with them, in so far as is needful to regulate his practice in that period of his life. When I am in one station I must either fail in the respect due to God, and

so lay myself open to justice, or I must know as much of God, as is requisite to influence a due regard in that station, or that part of my life that now runs; and therefore a universal defect as to those discoveries, must inevitably overthrow the pretended ability of man to make those discoveries, and consequently the sufficiency of the light of nature, to beget or maintain religion, which cannot be supported without them.

Now, for clearing this matter, it is to be considered, that what we are upon is a negative, and it belongs to those who affirm man able to make such discoveries of God, to show by whom, and where these discoveries have been made, or to produce those notices of God that are built on the mere light of nature, that are sufficient to this purpose. Now none of them dare pretend this has been done, or at least, show who has done it, or make the attempt themselves; and therefore we might take it as confessed, that it is not to be done. But if it is still pretended that this has been done, though without telling us by whom, or pointing to these discoveries where we may find them,—I answer, how shall we know this? May we know it by the effects of it in the lives of those who either have had no other light save that of nature, as it was with the philosophers of old before Christ, or who own none other save that of nature, as the deists and others who rejected Christianity? Truly if we judge by this rule, we are sure the negative will be much confirmed; for it is plain that those notions of a God, which were entertained by the philosophers of old, influenced none of them to glorify him as God. The vulgar heathens were void of any respect to the true God; nay, by the whole of their practice betrayed the profoundest ignorance, and most contemptuous disregard of him. The philosophers, not one of them excepted, whatever notions they had of a Deity, and whatever length some of them went in morality, upon other inducements, yet showed nothing like to that peculiar, high, and extensive respect to the one true God, which we now inquire after. We may bid a defiance to the deists, to show us any thing like it in the practice even of a Socrates, a Plato, a Seneca, or any others of them. Their virtue was plainly built upon another bottom. It has been judiciously observed by one of late, that there was little notice taken of God in their ethics; and I may add, as little regard in their practice. Nor are the lives of our deists, or others since, any better proof of the sufficiency of the natural notices of God, to beget and support a due veneration for him.

If the deists decline this trial of the sufficiency of those discoveries of a God, by their influence upon practice, then we must look at them in themselves. And here we must have recourse, either to those who had no acquaintance with the scripture revelation; or to those who have given us accounts of God amongst ourselves; who though they own not the scriptures to be from God, yet have had access to them, for the improvement of their own notions about God. The last sort might be cast, as incompetent witnesses in this case, upon very relevant grounds. But we shall give our enemies all that they can desire, even as to the advantage they may have this way, that they may see our cause is not wanting in evidence and certainty. We begin then with those who have been left to the mere light of nature, to spell out the letters of God's name, from the works of creation and providence, without any acquaintance with the more plain scripture account of

God. Now what we have to say as to them, we shall comprise in a few observations.

I. As for the attainments of the vulgar heathens, there is no place for judging of them otherwise than by their practice. They have consigned nothing to writing, and so we have no other way to guess at their opinions in matters of religion, but either by their practice, or by ascribing to them the principles of those who in their respective countries had the disposal of these matters. Whichever way we consider the matter, it must be owned that the vulgar heathens were stupidly ignorant as to the truths of religion. If we make their practice the measure of judging, which in this case is necessary, none can hesitate about it. If we make the principles and knowledge of their leaders the standard whereby we are to judge of their attainments, and make a suitable abatement, because scholars must always be supposed to know less than their masters, I am sure the matter will not be much mended, as the ensuing remarks will in part clear.

II. As to the philosophers, if I had time and opportunity to present in a body or system, all that has been said, not by one of them, but by all the best of them put together, it would put any one that reads, to wonder, that they, "who were such giants," as an excellent person speaks, "in all other kinds of literature, should prove such dwarfs in divinity, that they might go to school to get a lesson from the most ignorant of Christians that know any thing at all."* Any one that will but give himself the trouble to peruse their opinions about God, as they lie scattered in their writings, or even where they are proposed to more advantage, by those who have collected and put them together, will soon be convinced of how low a stature their divinity was, and how justly the apostle Paul said, that by their wisdom they knew not God. All their knowledge of God was no more than plain and gross ignorance; of which the best of them were not ignorant, and therefore Thales, Solon, Socrates, and many others spoke, either nothing of God at all, or that which was next to nothing. And it had been well for others, if they had done so too: what they spoke, not only falling short of a sufficient account; but presenting most abominable and misshapen notions about God; of which we have a large account in *Cicero de Natura Deorum*.†

III. Besides that endless variety amongst different persons, in their opinions about a Deity, which is no mean evidence of their darkness, even the very same persons, who seem to give the best accounts, are wavering and uncertain, say and unsay, seem positive in one place, and immediately in the very next sentence seem to be uncertain and fluctuating. Thus it is with them all, and thus it usually is with persons who are but groping in the dark, and know not well how to extricate themselves.

IV. They who go furthest, have never ventured to give any methodical account. They wanted materials for this; and therefore give but dark hints here and there. Cicero, who would make one

* Sir Charles Wolsey's Reasonableness of Scripture Belief.

† Cicero, lib. i. p. 4. Qui vero deos esse dixerunt, tanta sunt in varietate ac dis-sensione constituti, ut eorum molestum sit annumerare sententias. Nam de figuris deorum et de locis atque sedibus et actione vitæ, multa dicuntur, &c.

expect such an account, while he inscribes his book *De Natura Deorum*, yet establishes scarce any thing; but spends his time in refuting the opinion of others, without daring to advance his own.*

V. They who have gone farthest, are too narrow in their accounts, they are manifestly defective in the most material things. They are all reserved about the number of the gods. It is true the best do own that there is one supreme; but then there is scarce any of them positive that there are no more gods save one. No not Socrates himself, who is supposed to have died a martyr for this truth, durst own this plainly. And while this is undetermined, all religion is left loose and uncertain; and mankind cannot know how to distribute their regard to the several deities. Hence another defect arises, and that is about the supereminency of the divine excellencies. Although the Supreme Being may be owned superior in order, yet the inferior deities being supposed more immediate in their influence, this will subtract from the supreme Deity much of his respect, and bestow it elsewhere. Moreover, about God's creating power, their accounts are very uncertain, few of them owning it plainly. Nor are any of them plain enough about the special providence of God, without which it is impossible to support religion in the world.

VI. As their accounts are too narrow, so in what they do own, they are too general. But will this maintain religion? No, by no means. But there must be a particular discovery of these things. Well, do they afford this? Nay, so far are they from explaining themselves to any purpose here, that industriously they keep in dark generals. The divine excellencies, unless it be a few negative ones, they do seldom attempt any explication of: his providence they dare not attempt any particular account of. The extent of it to all particular actions is denied by many of their schools, owned distinctly by few, if any; but particularly cleared up by none of them. The laws whereby he rules men are nowhere declared. When some of them are insisted on in their ethics, the authority of God in them, which is the only supreme ground of obedience, and that which alone can lay any foundation for our acceptance in that obedience at God's hand, is nowhere taken notice of.† The holiness of the divine nature, which is the great restraint from sin, is little noticed, if not where some of the more abominable evils are spoke of. The goodness of God as a rewarder is not by any of them cleared up. And yet upon these things the whole of religion hangs; which by them are either wholly passed over, or mentioned in generals, or darkened by explications that give no light to the generals; at least, and for most part are so far from explaining, that they obscure, nay, corrupt them, by blending pernicious falsehoods with the most valuable truths.

VII. The discoveries they offer are not for most part proven, but merely asserted. Notions they are, most of them learned from tradition, and they were, it would seem, at a loss about arguments to support them. Where the greatest certainty is required, least is found.

* *De Natura Deorum*, lib. ii. An, inquit, oblitus es quod initio dixerim, facilius me talibus de rebus, quod non sentirem quam quod sentirem dicere posse.

† — Doctrinam de providentia rerum particulari sive gratia a veteribus (quatenus ex eorum libris qui extant, collegi potest) remissus credi observamus, *Herbert*, de Veritate, p. 271, 272.

VIII. Where they do produce arguments, as they do sometimes, for the being and providence of God in general, they are too dark and nice, both in matter and manner, to be of any use to the generality of mankind.

To have produced particular instances for the justification of each of these observations, would have been too tedious. Any one that would desire to be satisfied about them, may be fully furnished with instances, if he will give himself the trouble to peruse *Cicero de Natura Deorum*, the lives of the philosophers by *Diogenes Laertius*, or Stanley's lives; but especially the writings of the several philosophers themselves concerning this subject. Nor will this task be very tedious, if he is but directed to the places where they treat of God; for they insist not long on this subject, and the better and wiser sort of them are most sparing.

When I review these observations, which occurred by reading the works of the heathens, and their opinions concerning God, I could not but admire the gross inadvertency, to give it no worse word, of the deists (and more especially of the learned Herbert, who was a man of learning and application), who pretend that the knowledge of those general attributes of God, his greatness and his goodness, vulgarly expressed by *Optimus Maximus*, are sufficient: since it is plain from what has been said, that this general knowledge is of no significancy to influence such a peculiar, high, and extensive practical regard to the Deity, as the notion of religion necessarily imports. Of which even Blount was, it seems, aware, when he confesses, in his *Religio Laici*, that there is a necessity that his articles must be well explained. 2. It is plain that the philosophers, and consequently the common people, did not understand well the meaning of those articles, or of these general notions concerning God, at least, in any degree answerable to the end we now have in view.

I dare submit these observations, as to their truth, to any impartial person, who will be at pains to try them, upon the granting of a two-fold reasonable demand. 1. That he will consult either the authors themselves, or those who cannot be suspected of any bias, by their being Christians, which I hope deists will think just; such are Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, &c. or those who have made large collections, not merely of their general sentences concerning God, but of their explications. In which sort Stanley excels. 2. I require that, in reading the authors, they do not lay hold on a general assertion, and so run away, without considering the whole of what the authors speak on that head. The reasons why I make these demands, are, first, some persons designing, for one end or other, to illustrate points in Christianity with quotations from heathen authors, take up general expressions, which seem congruous with, or may be the same which the scripture uses, without considering how far they differ, when they both descend to a particular explication of those general words. Again, some Christians, writing the lives of philosophers and collecting their opinions, are misled by favour to some particular persons, of whom they have conceived a vast idea, and therefore either suppress or wrest what may detract from the person they design to magnify. M. Dacier, for instance, has written the life of Plato: but that account is the issue of a peculiar favour for that philosopher's notions in general; and it is evi-

dently the aim of the writer to reconcile his sentiments to the Christian religion; a work that some others have attempted before. To this purpose Plato's words are wrested, and such constructions put on them, as can no other way be justified, but by supposing that no material points of the Christian religion could be hid from Plato or his master Socrates. And yet after all, Plato's gross mistakes, and that in matters of the highest import, yea, and such of them, as are supposed, generally, to lie within the reach of nature's light, are so obvious and discernible, that the evidence of the thing extorts an acknowledgment.* To give but one instance, after the writer has made a great deal ado about Plato's knowledge of the Trinity, a story which has been oft told, but never yet proven, it is plainly acknowledged, that he speaks of the three persons of the Deity as of three gods, and three different principles, which is, in plain terms, to throw down all that was built before, and prove that Plato knew neither the Trinity, nor the one true God. Finally, general sentences occur in those authors, which seem to import much more knowledge of God, than a further search into their writings will allow us to believe they had: for any one will quickly see, that in those general expressions, they spoke as children that understand not what they say, or at least, have but a very imperfect notion of it. And though this may seem a severe reflection on these great men; yet I am sure none shall impartially read them, who will not own it just.

But now, to return to our subject, this sufficient discovery of God not being found amongst those who were strangers to the scriptures and Christianity; let us next proceed to consider those who have had access to the scriptures, and lived since the Christian religion obtained in the world. And here it must be owned, that since that time, philosophers have much improv'd natural theology, and given a far better account of God, and demonstrated many of his attributes from reason, that were little known before, to the confusion of atheists. From the excellent performances of this kind, which are many, I design not to detract. I am content a due value be put on them; but still I am for putting them only in their own place, and ascribing no more to them, than is really their due. Wherefore, notwithstanding what has been now readily granted, I think I may confidently offer the few following remarks on them.

I. We might justly refuse them, as no proper measure of the ability of unassisted reason, in as much as it cannot be denied, that the light, whereby those discoveries have been made, was borrowed from the scriptures: of which none needs any other proof, than merely to consider the vast improvement of knowledge, as to those matters, immediately after the spreading of Christianity, which cannot, with any show of reason, be otherwise accounted for, than by owning that this light was derived from the scriptures, and the observation and writings of Christians, which made even the heathens ashamed of their former notions of God. But not to insist on this,—

II. Who have made those improvements of natural theology? Not the heathens or deists. It is little any of them have done this way. The accurate systems of natural theology have come from Christian

* M. Dacier's Life of Plato, p. 141.

philosophers, who do readily own that the scripture points them, not only to the notions of God they therein deliver, but also to many of the proofs likewise, and that their reasons, if not thus assisted, would have failed them as much, as that of the old philosophers did them.

III. It is worthy our observation, that such of the Christians, who favour the deists most, such as the Socinians and some others, do give most lame and defective accounts of God. They who lean much to reason, their reason leads them into those mistakes about the nature and knowledge of God, which tend exceedingly to weaken the practical influence of the notion of a God. And we have reason to believe that the deists will be found to join with them, in their gross notions of God, as ignorant of the free actions of men, before they are done, as not so particularly concerned about them in his providence, as many such like notions, which sap the foundations of all the practical regard to God.

IV. But let the best of these systems be condescended on, they cannot be allowed to contain sufficient discoveries of God: for, it is evident beyond contradiction, that they are neither full enough in explaining what they in the general own; nor do they extend to some of those things which are of most necessity and influence to support practical religion. They prove a Providence, but cannot pretend to give any such account of it, as can either encourage or direct to any dependence on, trust in, or practical improvement of it. And the like might be made appear of other perfections. Again, they cannot pretend to any tolerable account of the remunerative bounty, the pardoning mercy, and grace of God, on which the whole of religion, as things now stand, entirely hangs. Can they open these things so far as is necessary to hold up religion in the world? They who know what religion is, and what they have done, or may do, will not say it.

V. In their proofs of these truths, there must be owned a want of that evidence which is requisite to compose the mind in the persuasion of them, and establish it against objections. Let scripture light be laid aside, which removes objections; and let a man have no more to confirm him of those truths, save these arguments, the difficulties daily occurring from obvious providences will jumble the observer so, that he will find these proofs scarce sufficient to keep him firm in his assent to the truths; and if so, far less will they be able to influence his practice suitably against temptations to sin. Now this may arise, not so much from the real weakness of the arguments, which may be conclusive, as from this, that most of them are rather drawn *ab absurdo*, than from any clear light about the nature of the object known; and hence there comes not that light along, as to difficulties, which is necessary to remove them. And though these arguments silence in dispute, and close the adversaries' mouth; yet they do not satisfy the mind. Moreover, some, of no mean consideration, have pretended, that many of these demonstrations, even as to some of the most considerable attributes of God, are inconclusive; particularly, they have asserted, that the unity of God was not to be proven by the light of nature, nor special providence: but not to carry the matter thus far, it is certain that the force of these demonstrations must lie very secret, that such persons, who owned the truths and bore them good will, yet could not find it.

Much more might be said on this head, but I am not willing to in-

validate these arguments, or even to show all that might, perhaps, not only be said, but made appear against them. But whatever there is as to this, it is certain that the discoveries of God by nature's light being small, are easily clouded by entangling difficulties arising from the dark occurrences of providence, and the natural weakness and unsteadiness of our minds, which are always to be found in matters sublime, and not attended with strong evidence. And attention in this case will increase the darkness, and force on such an acknowledgment as Simo- nides made to Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, that "the longer he thought about God, the more difficult he found to give any account of him."

VI. They must, whatever be allowed as to their validity in themselves, be owned of no use to the generality, nay, the far greater part of mankind. No man who knows them and knows the world, will pretend that one half of mankind is able to comprehend the force of them. And so they are still in the dark about God; which quite overthrows the whole story about the sufficiency of the natural discoveries of a Deity.

VII. It is plain, that there is no serving God, walking with or worshipping of him, without thoughts, and serious ones too, of him. Now his nature and excellencies are infinite, how then shall we conceive of them? Our darkness and weakness will not allow us to think of him as he is, and conceive those perfections as they are in him. And to conceive otherwise is dangerous. We may mistake in other things without sin; but to frame wrong, and other conceptions of God and his excellencies, than the truth of the thing requires, is dangerous and sinful; for it frames an idol. Now, though this difficulty may be easy to less attentive minds; yet it will quite confound persons who are in earnest, and understand what they are doing, in their approaches to God. Nor can ever the minds of such be satisfied in our present state, "otherwise than by God's telling us, how we are to conceive of him, and authorising us to do it in a way of condescension to our present dark and infirm state."

VIII. I cannot forbear to notice, as what wants not its own weight in this case, though in condescension we did a little wave arguments drawn from the practical influence of truths, that however great the improvements, as to notions of truths, concerning the nature of the Deity, may of late have been; yet the effects of these notices in their highest improvement, have been far from recommending them, as sufficient to the end we have now in view. This natural theology has rather made men more learned than more pious. Where scripture truth has not been received in its love and power, men have seldom been bettered by their improvements in natural theology. But we see in experience, that they who can prove most and best in these matters, evidence least regard to the Deity in their practice.

I shall add one observation more, which at once enforces the argument we are upon, against the sufficiency of natural religion, and cuts off a pretended retortion of it, against the Christian religion; and it is this: the religion the deists plead for, and are obliged to maintain, is a religion that pleads acceptance upon its own account, which has no provision against guilt and escapes, as shall be demonstrated hereafter; a religion which consequently must be more perfect, and so requires a more

exact knowledge of the Deity in order to its support: whereas, the Christian religion is one which is calculated for man in his fallen state: and the fall is in it every where supposed, and a gracious provision made against defects in knowledge, and unallowed practical escapes.

CHAP. V.

Proving the insufficiency of natural religion, from its defectiveness as to the worship of God.

THE argument we are to improve against the sufficiency of natural religion in this chapter, might have been considered as a branch of the foregoing: but, that we may be the more distinct, and to show a regard unto the importance of the matter, we shall consider it as a distinct argument by itself. Now, therefore, when we are to speak of the worship of God, it is not of that inward veneration that consists in acts of the mind, such as esteem, fear, love, trust, and the like; but of the outward, stated, and solemn way of expressing this inward veneration. That there should not only be an inward regard to the Deity in our minds, influencing the whole of our outward deportment, but that besides, there should be fixed, outward, and solemn ways of exercising and expressing these inward actings, seems evident beyond any reasonable exception.

1. From the general agreement of the world in this point. All the world has owned some worship necessary. Every nation and people had their peculiar way of worship. It is true, most of them were ridiculous, many of them plainly wicked, and all of them vain: but this makes not against the thing in general; only it bespeaks the darkness of nature's light, as to the way of managing in particulars, that which in the general it directs to.*

2. The deists themselves own this much. Herbert in his treatise, *de Religione Gentilium*, confesses it a second branch of the generally received religion, for which he pleads, that God is to be worshipped. It is true, in his next, while he tells us that virtue and piety were owned to be the principal means of worshipping him, he would seem to preclude us from the benefit of the former acknowledgment. But yet he dares not assert, that this which he condescends on was the only way, and so pretend the worship, we speak of, unnecessary: but being to hold forth the sufficiency of this natural religion, he was loath to speak any more of that which would lead him, if he had considered it, unto a discovery of its nakedness. But others of the deists do own the necessity of such a worship, and pretend prayer and praise sufficient to this purpose, as he also doth in his other treatises, particularly *de Veritate*.†

3. The same reasons which plead for inward acts, peculiarly directed to this end, plead for outward veneration likewise. If we have minds capable of this inward veneration, so are we capable of outward ex-

* Herbert de Veritate, p. 271, 272.

† Herbert de Veritate, ubi supra 272. Nos interea externum illum Dei cultum (sub aliqua religionis specie) ex omni seculo, regione, gente evicimus.

pressions; and are under the same obligations to employ those latter sort of powers to the honour of God, that binds us to the former. Nor is there more reason why, besides that transient regard we ought to pay him in all our actions, there should be inward acts peculiarly designed to express our inward veneration, than that there should be outward stated acts, peculiarly designed for the same purpose.

4. The nature of society pleads loudly for this. Mankind as united in societies, whether lesser, as families, or greater, as other societies, depend entirely on God: and therefore owe him reverence, and the expression of it, in some joint and fixed way. Public benefits require public acknowledgments: and this sort of dependence on, and subjection to the Deity should certainly have suitable returns.

5. It is incontrovertably evident, that many in the world do shake off all regard to the Deity, and walk in an open defiance to him and those laws which he has established. Certainly, therefore, it is the duty of such as keep firm, openly to testify their dependence on and regard to the Deity, which is not sufficiently done by the performance of those things which are materially according to the appointment of God. For what regard to God there is, influencing to those outward acts, cannot be clearly discerned by onlookers, who know not but somewhat, beside any regard to the authority of the lawgiver, may be at the bottom of all. It is therefore necessary that there be public, solemn actions, directly and plainly importing our avouchment of a regard to him, in opposition to those affronts that are publicly offered to him.

6. This worship is necessary in order to maintain and cherish that inward veneration. It is well known, however much we are bound to it, yet the sense of this obligation, and that veneration itself to which we are obliged, is not so deeply rivetted upon our minds, but it needs to be cherished, and the habits strengthened by actings. It is not so easy for men to do this by inward meditation, who for most part are little accustomed to this way, and can indeed scarcely fix their minds in this inward exercise at all, especially if they have no fixed way of exercising it, but are left at liberty to choose their own way. Religion therefore must go out of the world, or there must be stated and fixed ways of exercising it. This is easily justifiable from experience, which shows, that where once public worship is disregarded, any other sort of respect to the Deity quickly fails of its own accord.

7. It is necessary for the benefit of human society. The foundations of human society are laid upon the notion of a God, and the sacredness of oaths, and the fixed notions of right and wrong, which all stand and fall together. Nor is there any way of keeping up that regard to those things which are the props of human society, without such a worship of God as that we plead for. This all the law-givers were of old satisfied about, and took measures accordingly.

8. If religion has any valuable end, then certainly this must be one main part of it, to lead man to future happiness; which cannot, with any show of reason, be alleged to consist in any thing besides the enjoyment of God. And it is plainly ridiculous to suppose, that mankind can be kept up in any fixed expectation of, or close pursuit after this, if not animated and encouraged by some, nay, frequent experiences of commerce betwixt him and the Deity here. And it is foolish to

pretend, that this is otherwise to be had in any degree, answerable to this end, in any other way, than in the way of designed, fixed, solemn, and stated worship.

Now this much being said in the general for clearing the necessity of such a worship and the importance of it in religion; it remains that we prove the light of nature insufficient to direct us as to the way of it. And this we conceive may be easily made appear from the few ensuing grounds.

1. The manifest mistakes all the world fell into, who were left in this matter to the conduct of the mere light of nature, abundantly evince the incompetency of the light of nature for man's direction, with respect to the worship of God. Every nation had their own way of worship, and that stuffed with blasphemous, unworthy, ridiculous, ungrounded, impious, and horrid rites and usages, of which there are innumerable accounts everywhere to be met with. We can no where in the heathen world, find any worship that is not manifestly unworthy of, and injurious to the glorious God. Surely that light that suffered the world to lose their way so evidently, must be sadly defective. Their worship was everywhere such, even where wise men were the instituters of it, that it could not satisfy any person who had any true notion of God, and was the scorn of the wise and discerning. Nor can it with any show of reason be pleaded, that these defects and enormities are to be charged, not on the defectiveness of the light of nature, but the negligence of those who did not use it to that advantage it might have been used, since it has been above proven, that the only way we can judge what nature's light can do, is by considering what it has done somewhere or other; and these enormities did everywhere obtain. They were not peculiar to some places; but wherever men were left to the mere light of nature, there they fell into them.

2. These ways of worship, such as prayer and praise, which are condescended upon by the deists, and seem in general to have the countenance of reason; yet, as they are discovered by the light of nature, can no way satisfy. Be it granted that the light of nature directs to them in general, and binds them on us as duty; yet it must be allowed, that this is not enough; for the difficulty is, how we shall in particular manage them to the glory of God and our own advantage. The duty is stated in general, and when we begin to think of compliance with it, we find the light of nature, like the Egyptian task-masters, sets us our work, and demands brick, while yet it allows us no straw. What endless difficulties are we cast in, about the matter of our prayers and praises? What things shall we pray to God, and praise him for? How shall we be furnished with such discoveries of the nature, excellencies, works of God, and what things are proper for us, as may be sufficient to guide us in our prayers and praises, and keep us up in a close attendance on these duties, in the whole tract of our lives, without wearying or fainting? Are we, because we know not what is good or ill for us, to hold in mere generals, as the best of the philosophers thought? If so, will the mind of man for so long a tract of time be able to continue in this general way without nauseating; or, shall we descend to particulars? If so, how shall materials be furnished to us for such particular addresses, who know so little of God's works, or our own wants? Again, who shall teach us the way and manner of praying and praising,

which will be acceptable to God? Shall every one's fancy be the rule? If there be a fixed rule, which and where is it? Again, what security have we from the mere light of nature, as to the success and acceptance of these duties? It will be to no advantage to except, that God requires of us no more than he has directed us in; for this is to beg the main question: were it once granted, that no more is required than what the light of nature directs to, there might be some countenance for this plea, "That what it gives no directions in, will not be insisted upon by God;" but this is plainly refused, and so the difficulties remain. Nor is it to more advantage to pretend, that the substance being agreed to, God will not insist upon circumstances of worship: for the difficulties objected respect not merely the circumstances, but the very substantial parts of these duties. As to what may be pretended of the influence of the hopes of eternal life, toward the keeping up men in an attendance on duties, as to the particular manner of the performance of which, and the grounds of acceptance, they are entirely in the dark. This plea shall be fully considered afterwards. And as it is obvious, that no general supposal of benefit can for any long tract of time keep men steady in the performance of actions, about the nature and acceptance of which they are in doubt; so it shall be made appear there is no ground from the mere light of nature for any such hope of future felicity, as can relieve in this case.

3. The plain confession of the more thoughtful, wise, and discerning of the heathen world plainly proves this.* The followers of the famed Confucius in China, though they own that there is one supreme God, yet profess themselves ignorant of the way he is to be worshipped, and therefore think it safer to abstain from worshipping, than err in the assignation of improper honour to him. Plato, in his second Alcibiades, which he inscribes, *of prayer*, makes it his business to prove, that we know not how to manage prayer, and therefore concludes it safer to abstain altogether, than err in the manner. Alcibiades is going to the temple to pray, Socrates meets him, dissuades him, and proves his inability to manage the duty, of which he is at length convinced: whereupon Socrates concludes, "You see," says he, "that it is not at all safe for you to go and pray in the temple—I am therefore of the mind, it is much better for you to be silent—And it is necessary you should wait for some person to teach you how you ought to behave yourself, both towards the gods and men." To which Alcibiades said, "And when will that time come, Socrates? and who is he that will instruct me? With what pleasure should I look on him!" To which he replies, "He will do it who takes a true care of you. But, methinks, as we read in Homer, that Minerva dissipated the mist that covered Diomedes, and hindered him from distinguishing God from man; so it is necessary that he should, in the first place, scatter the darkness that covers your soul, and afterwards give you those remedies that are necessary to put you in a condition of discerning good and evil; for at present you know not how to make a difference." Alcibiades says, "I think, I must defer my sacrifice to that time."† Socrates approves—"You have reason," says he,—"it is more safe so to do, than run so

* Hornbeck de Conversione Gentilium, lib. 5. cap. 6. p. 47.

† We have the same account of Socrates and Xenophon, of which see Stanley, p. 75.

great a risk." The famed Epictetus was so much of the same mind, that he knew no way but to advise every one to follow the custom of their country in worship.* Upon the same account Seneca rejects all this worship.† And memorable is the confession of Jamblicus, a Platonic philosopher, who lived in the fourth century.‡ "It is not easy to know what God will be pleased with, unless we be either immediately instructed by God ourselves, or taught by some person whom God hath conversed with, or arrive at the knowledge of it by some divine means or other." Thus you see how much these great men were bemisted in this matter, and may easily conclude what the case of the rest of mankind was.

4. The very nature of the thing seems to plead against the sufficiency of reason in this point: for it seems plainly to be founded on the clearest notions of the light of nature, that the worship of God is to be regulated by the will and pleasure of God; which if he reveal not, how can we know it? Hence it was that the heathens never pretended reason, but always revelation for their worship. The governors, all of them, did this. And Plato tells us, "that laws concerning divine matters must be had from the Delphic oracles." §

Much more then might be said on this head, were it needful: but I am apprehensive this is a point that the deists will not be fond to dispute with us; not only because they are no great friends to this worship, but because they can say so little on this head, which has any show of reason: of which their famed leader Herbert was sufficiently aware, when he tells us in his third article, "that virtue is the principal part of the worship of God;" whereby he owns, that there is indeed another part of it, which he dare not name, because he knows not what to say about it.

CHAP. VI.

Proving the insufficiency of natural religion, from its defectiveness as to the discovery, wherein man's happiness lies.

NEXT to the glory of God, the indisputable supreme end of man, and of the whole creation, of which I am not now to discourse; the happiness of man, is, past all peradventure, his chief end. Yea, perhaps, if we speak properly, except as above said, it is his only end. For whatever man is capable of designing, is comprehended under this, being either what doth, or, at least, is judged to contain somewhat of happiness in it, or what is supposed to contribute to that wherein satisfaction is understood to consist. Every thing a man aims at, is either aimed at as good in itself, or contributing to our good. The first is a part of our happiness; the last is not in proper speech designed, but the good to which it contributes, and that still is, as before, a part of our happiness. If religion is therefore any way useful or sufficient, it must be so with respect to this end. And since religion not only

* Epictet. Enchirid. cap. 38.

† Jambl. de Vita Pythag. cap. 28.

‡ Seneca, Epis. 95.

§ Plato de Legibus.

claims some regard from man, but pleads the preference to all other things, and demands his chief concern, and his being employed about it as the main business of his life, it must either contribute more toward this end, than any thing else, nay, be able to lead man to this end, otherwise it deserves not that regard which it claims, and is indeed of little, if any use to mankind. If then we are able to evince that natural religion is not sufficient to lead man to that happiness which all men seek, and is indeed the chief end of man, there will be no place left for the pretence of its sufficiency, in so far as it is the subject of this controversy betwixt the deists and us. And this we conceive may be made appear many ways. But in this chapter we shall confine ourselves to one of them.

If the light of nature is not able to give any tolerable discovery of that wherein man's happiness lies, and that it may by him be obtained, then surely it can never furnish us with a religion that is able to conduct him to it. This cannot with any show of reason be denied. It remains therefore that I make appear what I am now to assume, that the light of nature is not able to discover wherein man's happiness lies, and its attainableness. Now this I think is fully made out by the following considerations.

1. They who being left to the conduct of the mere light of nature, have sought after that good wherein man's happiness is to be had, could not come to any agreement or consistency among themselves. This is a point of the first importance, as being the hinge whereon the whole of man's life must turn; the spring which must set man a-going, and give life to all his actions, and to this they must all be directed. This, if any other thing ought to be easily knowable, and if the light of nature is a sufficient guide, must give evident discoveries of it. But, methinks, here is a great sign of the want of this evidence. Great men—learned men—wise philosophers—and industrious searchers of truth, have split upon this point, into an endless variety of opinions; in so much, that Varro pretends to reckon up no less than 288 different opinions. May I not now use the argument of one of the deists,* in a case which he falsely supposes to be alike, and thus in his own words argue upon this point, (only putting in, “the discoveries of the light of nature about happiness, or the evidence of those discoveries,” in place of the “evidence of the reasons of the Christian religion,” against which he argues,) “if the discoveries of it were evident, there could be no longer any contention or difference about the chief good: all men would embrace the same and acquiesce in it. No prejudice would prevail against the certainty of such a good. It is every man's greatest business here to labour for his happiness, and consequently none would be backward to know it. And if all do not agree in it, those marks of truth in it are not visible, which are necessary to draw an assent.”† But whatever there be of this, it is a most certain argument of darkness, that there is so great a difference, where the searchers are many, it is every one's interest to find, and the business and search is plied with great application.

2. The greatest of the philosophers have been plainly mistaken in it. They espoused opinions in this matter which are not capable of

* Oracles of Reason, p. 206.

† Ibid. p. 201.

any tolerable defence. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, defined them "happy, who are competently furnished with outward things, act honestly, and live temperately."* Socrates held, that there was but one chief good, which was knowledge, if we may believe *Diogenes Laertius* in his life. Aristotle, if we may take the same author's words for it, places it in virtue, health, and outward conveniency,† which no doubt was his opinion, since he approved Solon's definition of the chief good; and herein he was followed by his numerous school. Pythagoras tells us that the "knowledge of the perfections of the soul is the chief good." It is true, he seems at other times to speak somewhat differently; of which we may speak afterwards. Zeno tells us that it lies in "living according to nature." Cloanthes adds, that "according to nature is according to virtue." Chrysippus tells us, that it is "to live according to expert knowledge of things which happen naturally."‡ It is needless to spend time in reckoning up innumerable others, who all run the same way, placing happiness in that which is not able to afford it, as being finite, of short continuance, fickle, and uncertain. It is not my design to confute those several opinions. It is evident to any one, that they are all confined to time, and upon this very account, fail of what can make us happy.

3. They who seem to come some nearer the matter, and talk sometimes of conformity to God, its being the chief good, that it is our end to be like God, and the like, as Pythagoras and some others, but especially Plato,§ who goes further than any of the rest; yet cannot justly be alleged to have made the discovery, because we have not any account of their opinions clearly delivered by themselves, but hints here and there gathered up from their writings, which are very far from satisfying us as to their mind: besides, they are so variable, and express themselves so differently, in different places, that it is hard to find their mind. Nay, I may add, they are industriously and of design obscure. This Alcinous, the Platonic philosopher, tells us plainly enough in his doctrine of Plato, which is inserted at length in Stanley's lives,|| Plato says, "that he thought the discovery of the chief good was not easy, and if it were found out, it was not safe to be declared." And that for this reason, he did communicate his thoughts about it to very few, and those of his most intimate acquaintance. Now the plain meaning of all this, in my opinion, is, that he could not tell wherein happiness consists, or what that is which is able to afford it: or, at most, that though one way or other in his travels, by his studies, or converse, he had got some notions about it, yet he did not sufficiently understand them, and was not able to satisfy himself or others about them, and that therefore, he either entirely suppressed, or would not plainly speak out his thoughts, lest the world should see his ignorance, and that though his words differed, yet in very deed he knew no more of the matter than others. For to say, that, upon supposition, his discoveries had been satisfying, as to truth and clearness, and that he was capable to prove and explain them, they were not fit to be made known to the world, is to speak the grossest of nonsense; for nothing was so necessary to be known, and known universally, as the chief good, which

every one is obliged to seek after. To know this and conceal the discovery is the most malicious and invidious thing that can be thought of. And rather than charge this on Plato, I think it safer to charge ignorance on him. He speaks somewhat liker truth than others, while he tells us, "that happiness consists in the knowledge of the chief good, that philosophers, who are sufficiently purified, are allowed after the dissolution of their bodies, to sit at the table of the gods and view the field of truth; that to be made like God is the chief good, that to follow God is the chief good." Some such other expressions we find. But what does all this say? Does it inform us that Plato understood our happiness to consist in the eternal enjoyment of God? Some, who are loath to think that Plato missed any truth of importance which is contained in the scripture, think so; but, for my part, I see no reason to confirm me from all this that Plato understood any thing tolerably about the enjoyment of God, either in time or after time, or that really any such state of future felicity is certainly attainable. All this was only a heaven of his own framing and fancy fitted for philosophers, for the being of which, he could give no tolerable arguments. And all this account satisfies me no more that Plato understood wherein happiness consists, than the following does, that he knew the way of reaching it, which I shall transcribe from the same chapter of Alcinoüs's doctrine of Plato. "Beatitude is a good habit of the genius, and this similitude to God we shall obtain, if we enjoy convenient nature in our manner, education, and sense, according to law, and chiefly by reason and discipline and institution of wisdom, withdrawing ourselves as much as is possible from human affairs, and being conversant in those things only, which are understood by contemplation. The way to prepare, and as it were, to cleanse the demon that is in us, is to initiate ourselves into higher disciplines, which is done by music, arithmetic, astronomy, and geometry, not without some respect of the body, by gymnastic, whereby it is made more ready for the actions both of war and peace." I pretend not to understand him here: but this I understand from him, that one of three is certain, either he understood not himself, or had no mind others should understand, or that he was the most unmeet man in the world to instruct mankind about this important point, and to explain things about which the world was at a loss. When men speak at this rate, we may put what meaning we please upon their words.

4. It is plain that none of them have clearly come to know themselves, or inform others that happiness is not to be had here, that it consists in the eternal enjoyment of God after time, that this is attainable. These are things whereabout there is a deep silence, not so much as a word of them, far less any proof. If ever we were to expect such a thing, we might look for it from those who have not merely touched at this subject by the bye, and in dark hints; but have discoursed of moral ends on set purpose, such as Cicero and Seneca. Cicero frequently tells us that he designed to enrich his native country with a translation of all that was valuable in the Greek philosophers. He had perused them for this end, and thus accomplished, he sets himself to write of moral ends, which he does in five books. Here we may expect somewhat to the purpose: but if we do, we are disappointed. The first book sets off Epicurus's opinion about happiness with a great deal of

rhetoric. The second overthrows it. The third represents the Stoics' opinion. And the fourth confutes it. The fifth represents and asserts the Peripatetics' opinion, which had been as easily overthrown as any of them. And this is all you are to expect here, without one word of God, the enjoyment of him, or any thing of that kind, which savours of a life after this. Seneca writes, again, a book *de Vita Beata*, consisting of 32 chapters. Here we may find somewhat possibly. And indeed if one should hear him state the question, as he does in his second chapter, he would expect some great matters from him. "Queramus quid optime factum sit, non quid usitatissimum: et quid nos in possessione felicitatis æternæ constituat, non quid vulgo, Veritatis pessimo Interpreti, probatum sit. Vulgus autem tam chlamydatos, quam coronam voco." What may we not now expect? But, after this, I assure you, you are to look for no more words about eternity, nor any thing more, but a jejune discourse, in pretty sentences, about the Stoics' opinion, representing that a man would be happy, if his passions were extinct, and he were perfectly pleased with the condition he is in, be it what it will. Now, after this, who can dream that nature's light is sufficient to satisfy here? Is every man able to discover that which philosophers, the greatest of them, after the greatest application, failed so signally about, that scarce any of them came near it, none of them reached it?

5. Nor will it appear strange, that the heathen philosophers of old should be so much at a loss about future happiness, to any one who considers how difficult, if not impossible, it must be for any who rejects revelation, and betakes himself to the mere light of nature to arrive at the wished for, and necessary assurance of eternal felicity, after this life, even at this present time, after all the great improvements which the rational proofs of a future state have obtained, since Christianity prevailed in the world. If nature's light, now under its highest improvements, proves unable to afford full assurance, and still leaves us to fluctuate in uncertainty about future happiness; no wonder they should be in the dark who were strangers to these improvements.

That the arguments for a future state, since Christianity obtained, have received a vast improvement from Christian divines and philosophers, cannot modestly be denied. The performances of Plato and Cicero, on this point, which were the best among the ancients, are, when compared with our late Christian writers, but like the trifles of a boy at school, or the rude essays of a novice, in comparison to the most elaborate and complete performances of the greatest masters, if they bear even the same proportion. He who knows not this, knows nothing in these matters. Yea, to that degree have they improved those arguments, that it is utterly impossible for any man, who gives all their reasons for the continuance of the soul after death, with their answers to the trifling pretences of the opposers of this conclusion, a fair hearing and due consideration, to acquiesce rationally in the contrary assertion of atheists and moral deists; or, not to favour, at least, this opinion, as what is highly probable, if not absolutely certain.

But after all, if we are left to seek assurance of this from the unassisted light of nature, that certainly God has provided for, and will actually bestow upon man, and more especially man who is now a sinner, future and eternal felicity; we will find ourselves plunged amidst inextricable difficulties, out of which the light of nature will find it very difficult, if

not impossible, to extricate us. It is one thing to be persuaded of the future separate subsistence of our souls after death, and another to know in what condition they shall be; and yet more to be assured, that after death our souls shall be possessed of eternal happiness. It is precisely about this last point we are now to speak. The arguments drawn from the light of nature will scarce fix us in the steady persuasion of future and eternal felicity. There is a great difference betwixt our knowledge of future punishments, with the grounds whereby we are led to it, and our persuasion of future and eternal rewards. Upon inquiry the like reasons will not be found for both. Our notices about eternal rewards, when the promises of it contained in the scriptures are laid aside, will be found liable to many objections, hardly to be solved by the mere light of nature, which do not so much affect the proofs advanced for future punishments. Besides, the entrance of sin, its universal prevalence in the world, and the consequences following upon it, have so benighted man, as to any knowledge he otherwise might have had about eternal happiness, that now it will be found a matter of the utmost difficulty, if not a plain impossibility for him to reach assurance of eternal felicity by the mere light of nature, however improved.

The pleas drawn from the holiness and justice of God say much for the certain punishment, after this life, of many notorious offenders, who have wholly escaped punishment here; especially as they are strengthened by other collateral considerations clearing and enforcing them. But, where the pleas for future and eternal rewards, from the justice and goodness of God, on the one hand, and the sufferings of persons really guilty of sin, but in comparison of others virtuous, on the other; will with equal firmness conclude, that God is obliged to, or certainly will reward their imperfect virtue, and compensate their sufferings, may, and perhaps not without reason, be questioned.

That it is congruous, virtue should be rewarded, may perhaps easily be granted. But what that reward is, which it may from divine justice or bounty claim, it will not be easy for us to determine, if we have no other guide than the mere light of nature. The man who perfectly performs his duty, is secured against the fears of punishment, and has reason to rest fully assured of God's acceptance and approbation of what is every way agreeable to his will. He has a perfect, inward calm in his own conscience, is disturbed with no challenges, and has the satisfaction and inward complacency, resulting from his having acquitted himself according to his duty: his conscience assures him he has done nothing to provoke God to withdraw favours already given, or to withhold further favours. And though he cannot easily see reason to think God obliged, either to continue what he freely gave, or accumulate further effects of bounty upon him, or to protract his happiness to eternity; yet he has the satisfaction of knowing, that he had not rendered himself unworthy of any favour. This reward is the necessary unavoidable consequence of perfect obedience.

But this comes not up to the point. That which the light of nature must assure us of, is, that virtuous men, on account of their virtue, may claim and expect, besides this, a further reward, and that of no less consequence, than eternal felicity. Now, if I mistake it not, when the promise of God, which cannot be known without revelation, is laid

aside, the mere light of nature will find it difficult to fix upon solid grounds, for any assurance as to this. Many thorny difficulties must be got through. Not a few perplexing questions must be solved. If it is said, that the justice of God necessarily obliges him, besides that reward necessarily resulting from perfect obedience, of which above, further to recompense, even the most exact and perfect performance of our duty, antecedently to any promise given to that effect with future and eternal felicity; it may be inquired, how it shall be made appear that virtue, suppose it as perfect as you will, can be said to merit, and to merit so great a reward. May not God, without injustice, turn to nothing an innocent creature? Sure I am, no mean nor incompetent judges have thought so.* Where is the injustice of removing or taking away what he freely gave, and promised not to continue? Is it modest or safe for us, without the most convincing evidences of the inconsistency of the thing, to limit the power of God, or put a cannot on the Almighty? And does not the very possibility of the annihilation of an innocent creature, in a consistency with justice, though God, for other reasons, should never think fit to do it, entirely enervate this plea? If God without injustice may take away the being of an innocent creature, how is it possible to evince, that, in justice, he must reward it with eternal happiness? Again, if we may for our virtue claim eternal felicity, as due in justice, may it not be inquired what exercise of virtue, for how long a time continued, is sufficient to give us this title to eternal rewards? If the bounty and goodness of God is insisted on, as the ground of this claim, the plea from justice seems deserted. And here again it may be inquired whether the goodness of God is necessary in its egress? Whether the bounty of God ought not to be understood, to respect those things which are absolutely at the giver's pleasure to grant or withhold? Whether, in such matters, we can be assured, that bounty will give us this or that, which yet we want, is not in justice due, nor secured to us by any promise? Further it may be inquired how far must goodness extend itself as to reward? Is it not supposable, that it may stop short of eternal felicity, and think a less reward sufficient? Of so great weight have these, and the like difficulties appeared to not a few, and those not of the more stupid sort of mankind, that they have not doubted to assert boldly, that even innocent man, without revelation and a positive promise, could never be assured of eternal rewards. And how the light of nature can disengage us from these difficulties, were man perfectly innocent, I do not well understand.

But whatever there is of this, the entrance of sin and the consideration of man's case as involved in guilt, has cast us upon new and yet greater difficulties. From this present condition, wherein we find all mankind without exception involved, a whole shoal of difficulties emerge, never, I am afraid, to be removed by unassisted reason.

Now, it may be inquired, what obedience is it that can entitle us to eternal felicity? If none, save that which is perfect will serve, who shall be the better for this reward? Who can pretend to this perfect or sinless obedience? If imperfect obedience may, how shall we be

* See the Excellency of Theology, &c. by T. H. R. Boil, E. P. 25, 26, 27, &c. and Consid. about the Recon. of Reason and Rel. by T. E. P. 21, 22.

sure of this? How shall he who deserves punishment, claim, demand, and expect reward,—a great reward, yea, the greatest reward,—eternal happiness. If the goodness of God is pleaded, and it is said, that though we cannot expect in strict justice to have our imperfect obedience rewarded, yet we may hope it from the bounty of God; beside, what was above moved against this in a more plausible case, when we were speaking of innocent man, it may be further inquired, whether, though infinite bounty might deal thus graciously with man, if he were perfectly righteous, it may not yet withhold its favours, or at least, stop short of eternal felicity, with the best among sinners. Again, what degree of imperfection is it that will prejudice this claim? What may consist with it? Who is good in that sense, which is necessary to qualify for this expectation? Is there any such person existent? What way shall we be sure of this? Is it to be measured by outward actions only, or are inward principles and aims to come into consideration? Who can know these, save God? If it be said, we can know ourselves to be such: I answer, how shall we maintain any confidence of future, nay, eternal rewards, while conscience tells us we deserve punishment? What if by the mere light of nature we can never be assured of forgiveness? How shall we then by it be sure of eternal rewards? If we are not rewarded here, how can we know but that it has been for our sins that good things have been withheld from us? May not this be presumed the consequence of our known sins, or more covert evils, which self-love has made us overlook? If we suffer, yet do we suffer more than our sins deserve, or even so much? If we think so, will we be sustained judges competent of the quality of offences, and their demerit which are done against God, especially when we are the actors? To whom does it belong to judge? If ye meet with some part, for ye can never prove it is all of the demerit or deserved punishment of your sin here, will this conclude that ye shall be exempted from suffering what further God may in justice think due to them and you on their account hereafter? What security have ye that ye shall escape with what is inflicted on you here? And not only so, but instead of meeting with what ye further deserve, obtain rewards which ye dare scarce say ye deserve? If God spare at present a noted offender, who cannot without violence to reason be supposed a subject meet for pardon or for a reward, and reserve the whole punishment due to his crimes, to the other world; but in the meanwhile, sees meet to inflict present punishment on thee, though less criminal, perhaps to convince the world, that even less offenders shall not escape; if, I say, he deal thus, is there no way for clearing his justice, but by collating eternal happiness on thee? Why, if he inflict what further punishment is due to thee, in exact proportion to thy less atrocious crimes; and punish the other with evils proportioned to his more atrocious crimes, and make him up by the severity of the stroke for the delay of the punishment; if thus he does, I challenge any man to tell me where the injustice lies? And may not the like be said as to any other virtuous person, or whom thou supposeth such, who meets with sufferings?

Nor do less perplexing difficulties attend those other pleas for future happiness to man, at least, in his present condition; which are drawn from God's creating us capable of future happiness, implanting desires,

and giving us foretastes of it: all which would be given in vain, if there was no happiness designed for man after time.

But how by this we can be secured of eternal happiness, I do not well see. Nor do I understand how the difficulties which may be moved against this can be resolved. It may be inquired, whether this desire of happiness, said to be implanted in our natures, is really any thing distinct from that natural tendency of the creature, to its own perfection and preservation, which belongs to the being of every creature, with such difference as to degrees and the manner, as their respective natures require? If it is no more than this, it must be allowed essential to every rational creature. And if every rational creature has an essential attribute, which infers an obligation on God to provide for eternal happiness, and put it in possession of this felicity, if no fault intervene, doth it not thence necessarily follow, that God cannot possibly, without injustice, turn to nothing any innocent rational creature; nay, nor create any one, which it is possible for him again to annihilate without injustice? For if we should suppose it possible for God to do so, and thus without injustice frustrate this desire, where is the force of the argument? And is it not a little bold to limit God thus? I need not enter into the debate, whether there is any supposable case, wherein infinite wisdom may think it fit to do so? That dispute is a little too nice: for on the one hand, it will be hard for us to determine it positively, that infinite wisdom must in any case we can suppose, think it fit to destroy or turn to nothing an innocent creature; and on the other hand, it is no less rash to assert, that our not knowing any case, proves that really there is none such known to the only wise God. Besides, if we allow it only possible, in a consistency with justice and veracity for God to do it, I am afraid the argument has lost its force. Further, it may be inquired, whether the rational creature can in duty desire an eternal continuation in being, otherwise than with the deepest submission to the sovereign pleasure of God, where he has given no positive promise? If submission belongs to it, all certainty evanishes, and we must look elsewhere for assurance of eternal happiness. A desire of it, if God see meet to give it, can never prove that certainly he will give it. If it is said, that the creature without submission or fault may insist upon and claim eternal happiness; I do not see how this can be proven.

But again, do not these desires respect the whole man consisting of soul and body? Doth not death dissolve the man? Are not these desires apparently frustrate? How will the light of nature certainly infer from those desires, gusts, &c. that the whole man shall have eternal felicity, while we see the man daily destroyed by death; can this be understood without revelation? Does the light of nature teach us that there will be a resurrection? I grant, without the supposal of a future existence, we cannot easily understand what end there was worthy of God for making such a noble creature as man. But while we see man, on the other hand, daily destroyed by death, and know nothing of the resurrection of the body, which is the case of all those who reject revelation, we shall not know what to conclude, but must be tossed in our own minds, and be at a loss how to reconcile those seeming inconsistencies, which gave a great man occasion to observe, "that there can be no reconciliation of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, to be

righteously administered upon a supposition of the separate, everlasting subsistence of the soul only."* And for proof of this, he insists on several weighty considerations, which I cannot transcribe.

But should we give up all this? will this desire of happiness prove that God designed it for man, whether he carried himself well or not? If it prove not that sinful man may be happy, or that eternal happiness is designed for man, who is now a sinner, what are we the better for it? Are we not all in more or less guilty? What will it help us, that we were originally designed for and made capable of future felicity, if we are now under an incapacity of obtaining it? Do we not find that we have fallen short of perfect obedience? And can those desires assure us that God will pardon, yea, reward, and that with the greatest blessing which innocent man was capable of? Moreover, before we end this discourse, I hope to make it appear, that by the mere light of nature no man can assuredly know that sin shall be pardoned; and if so, it is vain to pretend, that we can be assured of eternal felicity in our present condition. They who have sinned less and suffered more in this life, shall not be so severely punished in that which is to come, as they who have sinned more grievously and escaped without punishment here; this reason assures us of: but it can scarce afford us so much as a colourable plea for eternal rewards, to any virtue stained with the least sin. The scriptures make mention of a happiness promised to innocent man upon perfect obedience; and of salvation to guilty man upon faith in Jesus Christ. Besides these two I know no third sort. As to the last, the light of nature is entirely silent, as we shall see afterwards. Whether it can alone prove the first, is a question: but that man in his present condition cannot be the better for it, is out of question.

6. Were it granted that these arguments are conclusive, yet the matter would be very little mended: for it is certain, that these arguments are too thin to be discerned by the dim eyes of the generality, even though they had tutors who would be at pains to instruct them. Yea, I fear that they rather beget suspicions than firm persuasions in the minds of philosophers. They are of that sort, which rather silence than satisfy. Arguments *ab absurdo* rather force the mind to assent, than determine it cheerfully to acquiesce in the truth as discovered. Other demonstrations carry along with them a discovery of the nature of the thing, which satisfies it in some measure. Hence they have a force, not only to engage, but to keep the soul steady in its adherence to truth; but these oblige to implicit belief, as it were, and therefore the mind easily wavers and loses view of truth; and is no longer firm, than it is forced to be so, by a present view of the argument. If learned men were always observant of their own minds, and as ingenuous as the auditor is in Cicero, in his acknowledgment about the force of Plato's arguments for the *immortality* of the soul, they would make some such acknowledgment as he does.† After he has told, that he has read oftener than once Plato's arguments for the *immortality* of the soul, which Cicero had recommended in the foregoing discourse, as the best that were to be expected, he adds, "But I know not in what way it is I give my assent while I read,—and

* Dr Owen on Heb. vi. 1, 2. vol. 3, p. 21. † Cicero Tus. Quest. lib. 3.

when I have laid aside the book and begin to reflect upon the immortality of the soul, all that assent gives way." In like manner might others say, when I pore upon those arguments, I assent: but when I begin to look on the matter, I find there arises not such a light from them, as is able to keep the mind steady in its assent. More especially will it be found so, if we look not only to the matter, but to the difficulties which offer about it. Yet this steadiness is of absolute necessity in this case, since a respect to this must be supposed always prevalent, in order to influence to a steady pursuit. The learned Sir Matthew Hale observes, that "It is very true, that partly by a universal tradition, derived probably from the common parent of mankind, partly by some glimmerings of natural light in the natural consciences, in some, at least, of the heathen, there seemed to be some common persuasion of a future state of rewards and punishments. But first it was weak and dim, and was even in many of the wisest of them overborne; so that it was rather a suspicion, or at most, a weak and faint persuasion, than a strong and firm conviction: and hence it became very unoperative and ineffectual to the most of them, when they had greatest need of it; namely, upon imminent or incumbent temporal evils of great pressure. But, where the impression was firmest among them, yet still they were in the dark what it was."

7. It is further to be considered, that it is not the general persuasion that there is a state of future happiness and misery which can avail,* but there must be a discovery of that happiness in its nature, or wherein it consists; its excellency and suitability to engage man to look on it as his chief good, pursue it as such, persevere in the pursuit over all opposition, and forego other things, which he sees and knows the present pleasure and advantage of, for it. Now, such a view the light of nature can never rationally be pretended as able to give: if it is, let the pretender show us where, and by whom such an account has been given and verified; or let him do it himself. And if this is not done, as it never has, and, I fear not to say, never can be done; it would not mend the matter, though we should forego all that has been above said, as was above insinuated, which yet we see no necessity of doing.

8. I might here tell how faintly the deists used to speak upon this head. Though, upon occasion, they can be positive; yet at other times they speak very modestly about the being of a future state of happiness, and tell us "that rewards and punishments hereafter, though the notion of them has not been universally received, the heathens disagreeing about the doctrine of the *immortality* of the soul, may yet be granted to seem reasonable, because they are deduced from the doctrine of providence ———, and that they may be granted parts of natural religion, because the wisest men have inclined to hold them amongst the heathen, &c. and now do in all opinions."† And as they seem not over certain as to the being of future rewards and punishments, so they plainly own they can give no account what they are. "What may be the nature and character of this after state of being, cannot be known, on account of the defect attending those conditions necessary for the ascertaining of the truth of the case," says the learned Herbert.‡

* Herb. de Ver., p. 59. † Orac. of Reas. p. 201. ‡ De Ver. p. 57, et alibi sapius.

CHAP. VII.

The light of nature affords not a sufficient rule of duty. Insufficiency hence inferred.

THERE is certainly no other way of attaining happiness, than by pleasing God. Happiness is no other way to be had, than from him, and no other way can we reasonably expect it from him, but in the way of duty or obedience. Obedience must either be with respect to those things which immediately regard the honour of the deity, or in other things. The insufficiency of natural religion as to worship, has been above demonstrated. That it is wanting as to the latter, viz. those duties which we called, for distinction's sake, duties of moral obedience, is now to be proven. That man is subject to God, and so in every thing obliged to regulate himself according to the prescription of God, has been above asserted, and the grounds of this assertion have been more than insinuated. Now if nature's light is not able to afford a complete directory as to the whole of man's conduct, in so far as the Deity is concerned, it can never be allowed sufficient to conduct man in religion and lead him to eternal happiness: while it leaves him at a loss as to sufficient rules for universal virtue, which even deists own to be the principal way of serving God and obtaining happiness. It is one of the principal things to which this is to be ascribed, and whereon man's hopes must reasonably be supposed to lean, if he is left to the mere conduct of the light of nature. Now the insufficiency of the light of nature in this point will be made fully to appear, from the ensuing considerations: some of which are excellently discoursed by the ingenious Mr Locke* in his "Reasonableness of Christianity," as delivered in the Scripture. If he had done as well in other points as on this, he had deserved the thanks of all that wish well to Christianity: but so far as he follows the truth, we shall take his assistance, and improve some of his notions, adding such others as are by him omitted, which may be judged of use to the case in hand.

I. Then, we observe that no man left to the conduct merely of the light of nature, has offered us a complete body of morality. Some parts of our duty are pretty fully taught by the philosophers and politicians. "So much virtue as was necessary to hold societies together; and to contribute to the quiet of governments, the civil laws of commonwealths taught, and forced upon men that lived under magistrates. But these laws, being for the most part made by such, who had no other aims but their own power, reached no further than those things that would serve to tie men together in subjection; or at most, were directly to conduce to the prosperity and temporal happiness of any people. But natural religion in its full extent, was no where, that I know, taken care of by the force of natural reason. It should seem by the little that hitherto has been done in it, that it is too hard a thing for unassisted reason, to establish morality in all its parts upon its true foundations, with a clear and convincing light."† Some parts have been noticed, and others quite omitted. A complete system of morality in

* Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 267.

† Ibid. p. 268.

its whole extent has never been attempted by the mere light of nature, much less completed.

2. To gather together the scattered rules that are to be met with in the writings of morality, and weave these shreds into a competent body of morality, in so far as even the particular direction of any one man would require, is a work of that immense labour, and requires so much learning, study, and attention, that it has never been performed, and never like to be performed, and quite surmounts the capacity of most, if not of any one man. So that neither is there a complete body of morality given us by any one. Nor is it ever like to be collected from those who have given us parcels of it.

3. Were all the moral directions of the ancient sages collected, it would not be a system that would be any way useful to the body of mankind. It would consist for most part of enigmatical, dark, and involved sentences, that would need a commentary too long for vulgar leisure to peruse, to make them intelligible. Any one that is in the least measure acquainted with the writings of the philosophers will not question this. Of what use would it be to read such morality as that of Pythagoras, whose famed sentences were, "Poke not in the fire with a sword; stride not over the beam of a balance; sit not upon a bushel; eat not the heart; take up your burthen with help; ease yourself of it with assistance; have always your bed-clothes well tucked up; carry not the image of God about you in a ring,"* &c. Was this like to be of any use to mankind? No sure, some of them indeed speak more plain, some of them less so; but none of them sufficiently plain to be understood by the vulgar.

4. Further, were this collection made, and, upon other accounts, unexceptionable; yet it would not be sufficiently full to be a universal directory. For, 1. Many important duties would be wanting. Self-denial, that consists in a mean opinion of ourselves, and leads to a submitting, and passing from all our most valuable concerns, when the honour of God requires it, is the fundamental duty of all religion, that which is of absolute necessity to a due acknowledgment of man's subjection and dependence; and yet we shall find a deep silence in all the moralists about it. Which defect is the more considerable, that the whole of our apostasy is easily reducible to this one point, an endeavour to subject the will, concerns and pleasures of God to our own. And no act of obedience to him, can, without gross ignorance of his nature, and unacquaintedness with the extent of his knowledge, be presumed acceptable, which flows not from such a principle of self-denial, as fixedly prefers the concerns of God's glory to all other things. Again, what duty have we more need of, than that which is employed in forgiving enemies, nay, in loving them? We have frequent occasions for it. If we are not acquainted that this is duty, we must frequently run into the opposite sin. But where is this taught among the heathens? Further, where shall we find a directory as to the inward frame and actings of our minds, guiding us how to regulate our thoughts, our designs? Some notice is taken of the outward behaviour; but little of that which is the spring of it. Where is there a rule for the direction of our thoughts, as to objects, about which they should be employed,

* Diog. Laert. life of Pythagoras.

or as to the manner, wherein they are to be conversant about them? These things are of great importance, and yet by very far out of the ken of unenlightened nature. Divine and spiritual things were little known, and less thought of by philosophers. 2. As this system would be defective as to particular duties of the highest importance; so it would be quite defective as to the grounds of those duties which are enjoined. It is not enough to recommend duty, that it is useful to us, or the societies we live in. When we act only on such grounds, we show some regard to ourselves and the societies whereof we are members; but none to God. Where are these cleared to be the laws of God? Who is he that presses obedience upon the consciences of men, from the consideration of God's authority stamped upon these laws he prescribes? And yet without this, you may call it what you will: obedience you cannot call it. It is well observed by Mr Locke,* "those just measures of right and wrong, which necessity had any where introduced, the civil laws prescribed, or philosophers recommended, stood not on their true foundations. They were looked on as bonds of society, and conveniences of common life, and laudable practices: but where was it that their obligation was thoroughly known, and allowed, and they received as precepts of a law, the highest law, the law of nature? That could not be without the clear knowledge of the lawgiver, and the great rewards or punishments for those that would not, or would obey. But the religion of the heathens, as was before observed, little concerned itself in their morals. The priests that delivered the oracles of heaven, and pretended to speak from the gods, spoke little of virtue and a good life. And, on the other side, the philosophers, who spoke from reason, made not much mention of the deity in their ethics."

5. Not only would this rule be defective and lame; but it would be found corrupt and pernicious. For, 1. Instead of leading them in the way, it would, in many instances, lead them aside. We should have here Epictetus binding you to temporize and worship the gods after the fashion of your country.† You should find Pythagoras forbidding you to pray for yourself to God, because you know not what is convenient.‡ You should find Aristotle and Cicero commending revenge as a duty. The latter you should find defending Brutus and Cassius for killing Cæsar, and thereby authorizing the murder of any magistrates, if the actors can but persuade themselves that they are tyrants. Had we nothing to conduct us in our obedience and loyalty, but the sentiments of philosophers, no prince could be secure either of his life or dignity. You should find Cicero pleading for self-murder, from which he can never be freed, nor can any tolerable apology be made for him. Herein he was seconded by Brutus, Cato, Cassius, Seneca, and others innumerable. Many of them practised it, others applauded their sentiments in this matter. You may find a large account in Mr Dodwel's apology for the philosophical performances of Cicero prefixed to Mr Parker's translation of his book "de Finibus." And you may find the deists justifying this in the preface to the "Oracles of Reason," wherein Blount's killing of himself is justified. Of the same mind was Seneca, who expressly advises the practice of it.§ We should here find cus-

* Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 268.

† Epict. Enchirid. cap. 38.

‡ Diog. Laert. Vit. Pyth. p. 7.

§ Seneca de Ira, lib. 3. cap. 15.

tomary swearing commended, if not by their precepts, yet by the examples of the best moralists, Plato, Socrates, and Seneca, in whom numerous instances of oaths by Jupiter, Hercules, and by beasts, do occur. In the same way we should find unnatural lust recommended. Aristotle practised it.* And Socrates is fully belied, if he loved not the same vice. Whence else could *Socratici Cinædi* come to be a proverb in Juvenal's days. Pride and self-esteem were among their virtues, which gives me occasion to observe, that this one thing overturned their whole morality. Epictetus, one of the best of all their moralists, tells us, "that the constitution and image of a philosopher is to expect good, as well as fear evil only from himself."† Seneca urgeth this everywhere.‡ "A wise man surveys and despises what is in the possession of others, with a frame of mind as impartial as that of God: and in this he is even the more honoured, that whilst God cannot use them, a wise man does not desire it."§ And again, "In some respects a wise man is above God himself."|| "Pride and self-esteem was a disease epidemical amongst them, and seems wholly incurable by any notions they had. Some arrived to that impudence to compare themselves before their own gods. It was either a horrible folly to deify what they postponed to their own self-estimation, or else it was a stupendous effect of their pride to prefer themselves to the gods they worshipped. Never any man amongst them proposed the honour of their gods as the chief end of their actions, nor so much as dreamed of any such thing; it is evident the best of them in their best actions reflected still back to themselves, and determinated there, designing to set up a pillar to their own fame."¶ That known sentence of Cicero, who speaks plain out what others thought, will justify this severe censure given by this worthy person, "True virtue longs to be honoured, nor indeed has virtue any other reward."** Were it needful, I might write volumes to this purpose, that would make one's flesh tremble to read. They who desire satisfaction in this point, may find it largely done by others. I shall conclude this first evidence of the corruption of their morality, with this general reflection of the learned Amyrald in his treatise of religion; "Scarce can there be found any commonwealth amongst those which have been esteemed the best governed, in which some grand and signal vice has not been excused, or permitted, or even sometimes recommended by public laws.†† 2. Not only did they enjoin wrong things, but they enjoined what was right to a wrong end, yea, even their best things as we heard but now, aimed at their own honour. We have heard Cicero to this purpose telling plainly that honour was their aim. Or what the poet said of Brutus killing his own sons when they intended the overthrow of the liberty of their country, "the love of country, and the insatiable desire of praise vanquished him," is the most that can be pleaded for most of them. Others are plainly blasphemous as we have heard from Seneca; designing to be above God by their virtue. At this rate this philoso-

* Diog. Laert. Vita Arist. lib. v. p. 323.

† Epict. Ench. cap. 27.

‡ Seneca, Epist. 73. § Id. Epist. 53. || Id. De Vita Beata, cap. 8.

¶ Sir Charles Wolsley's Reasonableness of Scripture Belief, p. 118.

** Cicero de Amicitia.

†† See instances to this purpose in a Discourse of Moral Virtue, and its Difference from Grace, p. 225.

pher talks very oft : let philosophy, says he, minister this to me, that it render me equal to God.* To the maintenance of this, their notions about the soul of man contributed much ; styling it a piece clipped from God, *Ἀποσπασμὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ*, or a part of God, *τὸν Διὸς Μέρος*, as Epictetus speaks. Horace calls it *divinæ particula auræ*, “a particle of the divine breath.” Cicero in his *Somnium Scip.* tells us what they thought of themselves, *deum scito te esse*, “know thyself to be a god,” and accordingly the Indian Brahmins vouched themselves for gods. And indeed they who debased their gods below men, by their abominable characters of them, it was no wonder to find them prefer themselves to them. Nor did any run higher this way than Plato. Let any one read his arguments for the immortality of the soul, and if they prove any thing, they prove it a god. Thus they quite corrupted all they taught, by directing it to wrong ends. 3. This system would corrupt us as to the fountain of virtue and its principle, teaching us to trust ourselves, and not depend on God for it. We have heard some speak to this purpose already ; and Cicero may well be allowed to speak for the rest. “From God we have reason—reason only ; but it is made good or bad by ourselves.” And a little after, near the close of his book, after he has owned our external advantages of learning to God, he subjoins, “No person ever ascribed with propriety the virtue which he possesses to God : for justly we are praised on account of our virtue,—by right we glory in it ; a thing which could not be if we had the gift from God—not from ourselves.”† Thus we see how corrupt they were in this point, and it is here easily observable whence they were corrupted as to their chief end. He that believes he has any thing that is not from God, will have somewhat also that he will not refer to him, as his chief end. 4. The corruption of this system, would in this appear, that it would be full of contradictions. Here we shall find nothing but endless jars ; one contemning as abominable what another approves and praises : whereby we should be led very often to judge neither right, rather than any of them. A man who, for direction, will betake himself to the declarations of the philosophers, goes into a wild wood of uncertainty, and to an endless maze, from which he should never get out. Plenty of instances, confirming these two last mentioned observations, might be adduced. If the reader desire them, I shall refer him to Mr Locke’s *Essay on the Human Understanding*, book i. chap. 3, par. 9, where he may see it has been customary with many nations to expose their children, bury them alive without scruple, fatten them for the slaughter, kill them, and eat them, and despatch their aged parents : yea, some, he will find, have been so absurd, as to expect Paradise as a reward of revenge, and of eating abundance of their enemies. Whether these instances will answer Mr Locke’s purpose, I dispute not now. I design not to make myself a party in that controversy. But I am sure such fatal mistakes as to what is good and evil, are a pregnant evidence of the insufficiency of the light of nature to afford us a complete rule of duty. If they who were left to it, blundered so shamefully in the clearest cases, how shall we expect direction, as to these that are far more intricate ?

6. Be this system never so complete, yet it can never be allowed to

* Seneca, Epist. 48. † Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. iii. P. mibi, 173.

be a rule of life to mankind. This I cannot better satisfy myself upon, than by transcribing what the ingenious Mr Locke has excellently discoursed on this head. "I will suppose there was a Stobens in those times, who had gathered the moral sayings from all the sages of the world; what would this amount to, towards being a steady rule, a certain transcript of a law that we are under? Did the saying of Aristippus, or Confucius give it authority? Was Zeno a lawgiver to mankind? If not, what he or any other philosopher delivered, was but a saying of his. Mankind might hearken to it or reject it as they pleased, or as it suited their interest, passions, principles, or humours. They were under no obligation: the opinion of this or that philosopher, was of no authority. And if it were, you must take all he said, under the same character. All his dictates must go for law, certain and true; or none of them. And then, if you will take the moral sayings of Epicurus (many whereof Seneca quotes with approbation) for precepts of the law of nature, you must take all the rest of his doctrine for such too, or else his authority ceases: so no more is to be received from him, or any of the sages of old, for parts of the law of nature, as carrying with them an obligation to be obeyed, but what they prove to be so. But such a body of ethics, proved to be the law of nature, from principles or reason, and reaching all the duties of life; I think no body will say the world had before our Saviour's time. And I may add, nor to this day has by the mere light of nature. 'Tis not enough," continues he, "that there were up and down scattered sayings of wise men, conformable to right reason. The law of nature was the law of conveniency too: and it is no wonder these men of parts, and studious of virtue, (who had occasion to think of any particular part of it,) should, by meditation, light on the right, even from the observable conveniency and beauty of it, without making out its obligation from the true principles of the law of nature, and foundations of morality." More he adds judiciously to this purpose: but this is enough. And hence it is plain, that such a system of morality would, if collected, at best be only a collection of problems, which every man is left at liberty to canvass, dispute, or reject; nay more, which every man is obliged to examine as to all its parts, in so far as it prescribes rules to him, and not to receive, but upon a discovery of its truth from its proper principles.

7. It is then plain that every man is left to his own reason to find out his duty by. He is not to receive it upon any other authority, than that of reason, if revelation is rejected. He must find out therefore, in every case, what he is to do, and deduce its obligation from the principles of the law of nature. But who sees not, that the most part of men have neither leisure nor capacity for such a work? Men may think duty easy to be discovered now, when Christianity has cleared it up. But Mr Locke well observes, "That the first knowledge of those truths, which have been discovered by Christian philosophers, or philosophers since Christianity prevails, are owing to revelation; though as soon as they heard and considered, they are found to be agreeable to reason; and such as can by no means be contradicted. Every one may observe a great many truths which he receives, at first from others, and readily assents to, as consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond his strength to have discovered himself. Native and original truth, is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we who

have it delivered, ready dug and fashioned into our hands, are apt to imagine. And how often at fifty and threescore years old are thinking men told, what they wonder how they could miss thinking of? which yet their own contemplations did not, and possibly never would have helped them to. Experience shows that the knowledge of morality, by mere natural light (how agreeable soever it be to it) makes but a slow progress and little advance in the world: whatever was the cause, it is plain in fact that human reason, unassisted, failed men in its great and proper business of morality.

8. As it is unquestionably certain, that the most part of mankind are not able, by their own reason, to frame a complete body of morality for themselves, or find out what is their own duty, in every particular instance, (I shall not speak of any man's being obliged to discover what belongs to other people's duty, lest our antagonists should suspect I design to open a door for priests, a set of men and an office which they mortally hate,) I speak only of what is every one's duty in particular. And I say it is evident the most part of mankind are unable to find this, which is not to be done, but by such strains of reasoning and connexion of consequences, which they have neither leisure to weigh, nor, for want of capacity, education, and use, skill to judge of; and as I say, they are unable for this, so I fear this task will be found too hard for the ablest philosophers. Particular duties are so many, and many of them so remote from the first principles, and the connexion is so subtle and fine spun, that I fear not to say, it must escape the piercing eyes of the most acute philosophers. And if they engage in pursuit of the discovery, through so many and so subtle consequences, they must either quit the unequal chase, or lose themselves instead of finding truth and duty. And if we allow ourselves to judge of what shall be, by what has been the success of such attempts, I am sure this is more than bare guess.

9. It is further to be observed, that no tolerable progress could be made herein, were it to be done before advanced years. But it is certain that youth, as well as riper age, is under the law of nature, and that age needs clear discoveries of duty the more, that in it irregular passions and inclinations are more vigorous, and it is exposed to more temptations than any other part of a man's life; and, besides, wants the advantages of experience, to fortify it against the dangerous influence of them which advanced years are attended with. Now it will be to no purpose to me to find out some years hence what was my duty before, as to obedience; for now the season is over. The law may discover my sin, but can never regulate my practice, in a period of my life that is past and gone. Every man must have the knowledge of each day's duty in its season. This is not to be had from the light of nature. If we are left at a loss in our younger years, as nature's light will have us, we may be ruined before knowledge come. Much sin must be contracted. Ill habits are like to be very much strengthened, before any stop come; yea, they may be so strong, that the foundation of inevitable ruin may be laid.

Finally, knowledge is requisite before acting, at least, in order of nature it is so; and must, at least, in order of time, be contemporary. Action gives not always time for long reasoning and weighing such trains of consequences as are requisite to clear duties from the first principles of nature's light, and enforce their obligation. And therefore

man left to it, is in a miserable plight, not much unlike to the case of the Romans, “*dum deliberant Romani, capitur Saguntum* :” “while he is searching for duty, the season is lost ;” and the discovery, if it comes, arrives too late to be of any use.

It is vain for any to pretend, that the knowledge of duty is connate to the mind of man. Whatever may be pretended as to a few of the first principles of morality, and it is but a very few of which this can be alleged, yet it is certain, it can never be without impudence extended to the thousandth part of the duties we are bound to in particular cases. General rules may be easy ; particular ones are the difficulty, and the application of generals to circumstantiate cases is a hard task. It is but with an ill grace pretended, that these duties are self-evident, and the knowledge of them innate or connate, call it what you please, to the mind of man—which the world has never been agreed about—which wise men, when the fairest occasions offered of thinking on them, could not discern—which philosophers, upon application and attention, cannot make out from the principles of reason. The reason why the knowledge of any truth is said to be innate, is, because, either the mind of man is struck with the evidence in its first proposal, and must yield assent, without seeking help from any principles of a clearer evidence ; or, because its dependence on such principles is so obvious, that the conclusion is so plainly connected with such principles, that it is never sooner spoken of, than its connexion with them, and so its truth, appears. Of the first sort few duties can be said to be. And if they were of the last sort, any person of a tolerable capacity would be able to demonstrate them upon attention. Now how far it is otherwise in this case who sees not ? Upon the whole I must conclude, that the light of nature is not sufficient to give us such a law or rule as may be a sure guide of those who desire to go right, so that they need not lose their way, or mistake their duty, if they have a mind to know it, nor be uncertain whether they have done it.

It will not relieve the deists to pretend, that some of the exceptions above mentioned, may be retorted upon Christians, and turned against the scriptures : for nothing but ignorance of the true state of the question can give countenance to this pretence. The scriptures are a rule provided by sovereign grace for fallen man, and by infinite wisdom are adjusted to God’s great design of recovering man to the praise of his own grace, in such a way as may stain the pride of all glory. They are sufficient as an outward mean, and do effectually conduct man to that happiness designed for him, under the influence of the assisting grace provided for him, and in the use of the means of God’s appointment. They provide a relief against any unavoidable defects in his obedience, and direct to the proper grounds of his acceptance in it ; but men, who pretend nature’s light is able to guide to happiness, are obliged to instruct that it affords us a rule of duty ; which of itself, without the help of any supernatural assistance, either as to outward means or inward influences, may be able to lead man to the obedience required ; and this obedience must be such, as answers our original obligation, and upon account of its own worth, is able to support, not only a hope of acceptance, but of future, nay, eternal rewards. For such as are left to the light of nature can neither pretend to any such outward means, nor inward assistance, nor any such relief against de-

fects in knowledge or practice, as the scriptures do furnish us with. Nature's light lays no other foundation for hopes of acceptance or reward save only the worth or perfection of the obedience itself. And this, if it is duly considered, not only repels the pretended retortion, but gives additional force to the foregoing argument.

CHAP. VIII.

Proving the insufficiency of natural religion, from its defects as to sufficient motives for enforcing obedience.

It is warmly disputed in the schools, whether rewards and punishments be not so much of the essence of a law, and so included in its notion, that nothing can properly be styled law which wants them. I design not to make myself a party in those disputes. But this much is certain, that laws and government are relatives; they mutually infer and remove each other. There is no government, properly so called, that wants laws, or somewhat that is the measure and standard of its administration. And there are no laws where there is no authority and government to enjoin them. Whence this plainly results, that obedience, if it does no more, yet it certainly entitles to the protection of the government. And disobedience not only denudes of any title to that, but lays open to such further severities, as the government shall have power to execute and see meet to use for its own preservation, against violators of its constitutions. But further, to wave this dispute quite, the nature of man which proceeds not to action save upon knowledge, makes this much certain, that whatever he may be supposed obliged to in strict duty, yet really in fact, he uses to pay no great regard to laws which are not enforced by motives or inducements, that may be supposed to work with him, as containing discoveries of such advantages attending obedience, and disadvantages following disobedience, as may powerfully sway him to consult his duty as well as interest, by yielding obedience. If then natural religion is found unable to discover those things which ordinarily prevail with man to obey, and carry him over any obstructions which lie in the way, it can never be supposed sufficient to lead man to happiness: for man is not to be driven but led; he is not to be led blindfolded, but upon rational views of duty and interest. That natural religion is in this respect exceedingly defective, is the design of this discourse to demonstrate. All those motives which usually have any influences, may, I think, be brought under the following heads. 1. A full view of the authority of the lawgiver and his laws. 2. A prospect of present benefit by obedience. 3. A prospect of future rewards for it. 4. Fear of punishment in case of disobedience. 5. Examples. Now, as I know no motive which may not easily without stretch be resolved into one of those, so, if I make it appear that nature's light is lame as to each of them, I think I have gone a great way to disprove its sufficiency to happiness. Well, let us essay it.

1. The great inducement to obedience is a clear discovery of the authority of the lawgiver, and laws thence resulting. This is not perhaps, properly speaking, a motive, as it is oft used: for in very deed

this is the formal reason of obedience. A regard whereto gives any action the denomination of obedience, and entitles to the law's protection, and other advantages; yet certain it is, that this should have the principal influence, from the ground just now laid down, and therefore we shall here speak of it. It will prevail far with man to obey the law of nature, if the light of nature clearly discovers how much the law-giver deserves that place; how well he is qualified for it; how indisputable his title to the government is; and how far he has interposed his authority, that the stamp of it is on these laws, to which we are urged to be subject, that they bear a plain congruity to his sublime qualifications—that he is concerned to have them obeyed—observes the entertainment they meet with—entertains a respect for the obedient—and resents disobedience. If we are left in the dark, as to all or most of these, it will exceedingly weaken our regard to the law. And that this is plainly the case, is now to be made appear. 1. It goes a great way toward the recommendation of any law, to be fully satisfied as to the qualifications of the framer. But how dark is the light of nature here? It discovers indeed his power and greatness: but its notions of his wisdom, justice, clemency, and goodness are exceedingly darkened, by the seemingly unequal distributions of things here below, the innumerable miseries under which the world groans, and other things of a like nature; that truly very few, if left merely to its conduct, would reach any such discoveries of those glorious properties, as would influence any considerable regard to those laws he is supposed to make.

I dispute not now what may be strictly known and demonstrated of God, by a train of subtile arguments. For I would not be understood so much as to insinuate the want of objective evidences of the wisdom and goodness of the Deity. Our question respects not so much these, as man's power of discerning them. It is not absolutely denied, that there are many and pregnant evidences of these attributes in the works of creation and providence; our question is only, whether there is such evidence of those perfections, especially in God's moral government of the world, everywhere appearing, as may be able effectually to influence the practice, and affect the mind of man in his present state, notwithstanding of any obstructions arising, either from the inward weakness of his faculties, or the works of God from without, which to the darkened mind of man may have a contrary appearance? And that which I contend, is, that such is the state of things, so they go in the world, and so blind are men's eyes, that there is not so near and clear evidence of these things in what is discernible by the most of men, as may strike strongly, affect powerfully, and have a lively influence to quicken to practice. If our governor is near, if he is daily conversant with us, if we have daily undisputed evidence of his goodness, wisdom, justice, clemency, and other qualifications fitting for government, without any actions that may seem to be capable of a contrary construction, or even of a dubious one, this enforces a regard to his commands. On the contrary, if he is little known, if his way of management is hid from us, if there are instances, which however possibly they may be just, yet have a contrary appearance to us, this weakens regard and quite confounds. And this is plainly the case as to God with men left to the mere conduct of the light of nature, not through any defect on

God's part, but through the darkness of the mind of man in his present state; and this is the more considerable, that we use to be more sensible of what evil any is supposed to do us, than of what good we receive from them. Now, since this observation is of use to prevent mistakes, I desire it may be carried along through the rest of our remarks. 2. It works powerfully, and strongly excites to obedience, if the indisputableness of the lawgiver's title, and the grounds whereon it leans, are clearly known. Now, as to God, the grounds of his title to the legislative as well as executive power, are the supereminent excellency of his nature, rendering him not only fit, but the only fit person for it; his creation of all things, and thence resulting, property in them as his creatures, such as his preservation of them in being, his providential care and inspection, and the many benefits he bestows on them. But we have heard already, how dim the discoveries of God's supereminent excellencies are, which the light of nature affords. As to his creation, it was disputed among the learned, and quite overlooked by the vulgar, amongst those who were left to the light of nature, as Baron Herbert well observes and clears. As to his close influence in their preservation, it could not be noticed or known, where the other was overlooked. His providential care and inspection, which, perhaps, as to its power of influencing, would go the greatest length, if it can be proven by the light of nature; yet cannot certainly by it be explained, and truly is so darkened by many obvious occurrences in the external administration of the world, that past all peradventure, it can never suitably affect men who have no other discoveries of it than the light of nature affords. As to God's benefits, though they are many, yet they did not affect so much, because they were conveyed by the intervention of such second causes, as did arrest, instead of helping forward the short-sighted minds of men, and detained them in contemplation of the servant who brought the favour, whereas they should have looked further to him who sent it; so they should have done, but so they did not. Again, some of their most valuable benefits,—their virtues, they denied God to be the author of, as we have heard above from Seneca, Cicero, and Epictetus. And finally, some of them were inclinable to think, that the benefits were more than countervailed by the evils we labour under. Thus were the minds of men darkened, and so they had continued, if we had been without revelation. 3. It is of much force to influence obedience if we have a clear and satisfying discovery of his concernment in those laws; that is, that he who is thus qualified for, and rightfully possessed of the government, has made such laws, and stamped his authority on them. However great ideas we have of his excellency and title to give laws, yet this will have no weight, if we are not clearly satisfied that these are his laws. Now, how palpably defective the light of nature is here, has been fully made out in the last chapter. 4. It will have no small force, if we had a clear knowledge, that these laws are in their matter fully congruous to the qualifications we desire in a lawgiver, such as wisdom, goodness, justice, clemency, and the like. But as these attributes are either not known, or darkly known by the light of nature, so the impress of them on the laws of nature has not been discovered, nor is it discoverable: for I doubt not but it might easily be made appear, that the whole frame of the laws of nature are adapted to the nature of man as innocent, and

endued with sufficient power to continue so, which is not the case with him now. And therefore how to reconcile these laws to the notions of God and man is a speculation, as of the last consequence, so of the greatest difficulty, which had never been got through, if God had not vouchsafed us another guide than the light of nature. 5. If the lawgiver is certainly known to have a great regard to his laws, and to take careful inspection of the observation of them, this will be strong inducement to regard them. But here nature's light is no less dark, than as to the rest. The whole face of things in the world seems to have so contrary an aspect, that we could never see clearly through this matter, if without revelation we were left to judge of God by the mere light of nature. The abounding of sin, prosperity of sinners, sufferings of the best, and the like, led some to deny quite God's providence and government; others of the better sort doubted of it, as Claudian elegantly represents his own case, *lib. 1. contra Rufinum*. Yea, to so great a height came these doubts, that it is to be feared many were carried to the worst side. It is certain the best of them were so confounded with those occurrences, that they could not spare reflections full of blasphemy upon Providence. The famed Cato's last words may scarce be excused from this crime. Finally, it is certain, that there was so much darkness about this matter, that none of them all paid a due regard to God.

I shall now leave this head, after I have observed one or two things; and the first of them is, that however some of these truths above mentioned may possibly be made out by a train of subtile arguments; yet such arguments, however they may draw an assent from a thinking man, not only transcend the capacity of the vulgar, but fail of exciting and affecting even the most philosophical heads. For to draw forth our active powers into action, the inducements must shine with a light that may warm the mind as it were, not only dissipating doubts about the reality of what is observed, but also showing its excellency. Upon this occasion I may not impertinently apply to the philosophers what *Plautus* says of comic poets;* I have often seen, that after the comic poets have said good things, and that they have been applauded for them, while they taught good manners to the people, as soon as they were got home, "no body was the better for their advice." The other thing I observe, is, that any defect as to the knowledge of the lawgiver is so much the more considerable, than any other, that a regard to the lawgiver is that which gives the formality of obedience to any action, and therefore the less knowledge there is of him, the less of obedience, properly so called, there will be. Thus far we have cleared how little nature's light can do for enforcing obedience from the discoveries it makes of the lawgiver.

II. A second head of motives to duty is present advantage. Now if the light of nature is able to prove, that obedience to the law of nature is like to turn to our present advantage, either as to profit or pleasure, this would be of weight; but it is needless to insist on this head; for who sees not, that there is but little to be said as to many duties here? Are they not cross to present inclinations? And for any thing nature's light can discover, diametrically opposite to our

* *Le Clerc Parrhosiana*, p. 52.

present interest and honour ; I mean according to the notions generally entertained of those things in the world ? so it is but little that it can say upon this head. How often are we so situated, that in appearance nothing stands in our way to pleasure, honour, or profit, but only the command ? It were easy to enlarge on this head ; but since it will not be readily controverted, I wave it. And indeed it were of no consideration, if present losses were otherwise compensated by future advantages.

III. If nature's light can give a full view of future rewards, then this will compensate present disadvantages, and be a strong inducement to obedience. But the discovery, if it is of any use, must be clear and lively, that it may affect and excite, as has been above observed. Well, what can nature's light do here ? Very little, as has been above fully demonstrated, when we discoursed of the chief end. It remains only now that we observe that evils and disadvantages discouraging from duty are present, sensible, great, and so affect strongly : wherefore if future rewards have not somewhat to balance these, they cannot have much influence. Now it has been made sufficiently evident, that all which nature's light has to put in the balance, to encourage the mind to go on in duty against present, sensible, certain, and great discouragements, is, at most, but a dark, conjectural discovery of rewards, or rather suspicion about them after time, without telling us what they are, or wherein they do consist. Will this ever prevail with men to obey ? No, it cannot. The prospect of future rewards was not that which prevailed with the most moral amongst the heathens of old. Their knowledge of these things, if they had any, was of little or no use or influence to them, as to their excitement to virtue.

IV. Nature's light is no less defective as to the discovery of punishments : for however the forebodings of guilty consciences, a dark tradition handed down from generation to generation, and some exemplary instances of divine severity, have kept some impressions of punishment on the minds of many in all ages ; yet it is well known, that those things were ridiculed by most of the philosophers, the poet's fictions made them contemptible, and the daily instances of impunity of sinners here weakened the impressions. Besides, evils that follow duty, and losses sustained, are sensible, present, certain, known, and so affect strongly, and therefore are not to be balanced by punishments, which are not, or rather, at least, are rarely executed in time, and whereof there is little distinct evidence after time. For be it granted that the justice and holiness of God render it incredible that so many transgressors as escape unpunished here should get off so ; yet certain it is that nature's light can no way inform what punishments shall be inflicted.

V. Nature's light can never point us to examples which may have any influence. There are but few of those who wanted revelation, even of the philosophers, who were not tainted with gross vices. We have strange stories told of a Socrates ; and yet, after all, he was but a sorry example of virtue. He is frequently, by Plato, introduced swearing. He is known to have basely complied with the way of worship followed by his country, which was the more impious, that it is to be supposed to be against the persuasion of his conscience ; yea, we find him with his last breath, ordering his friend to sacrifice the

cock he had vowed to Esculapius. Mr Dacier's apology for him is perfectly impertinent. He is accused of impure amours with Alcibiades, and of prostituting his wife's chastity for gain. It is evident that in the whole of his conduct, he shows but little regard to God. Such are the examples we are to expect here. We might give full as bad account of the famed Seneca, were it necessary to insist on this head, not to mention others of less consideration.

Now to conclude, how shall we by nature's light be prevailed on to obey, while it gives so unsatisfying discoveries of the law and lawgiver? Can show so little of present or future advantage by obedience, or disadvantage by disobedience? Nor can it offer any examples that are worth following. It is certain that the experience of the world justifies this account. What means it, that instances of any thing like virtue are so rare, where revelation obtains not? Sure it must say one of two, if not both; that either nature's light presents no inducements sufficient to influence practice, or that man is dreadfully corrupt: the deists may choose which, or both, and let them avoid the consequences if they can. It had been easy to have said a great deal more on this head. The subjects would have admitted of considerable enlargement; but this my design will not allow. I intend to keep close to the argument, and run out no further than is of necessity for clearing the force of that. And where the case is plain, as I take it to be here, I content myself with touching at the heads which clear the truth under debate.

CHAP. IX.

Showing the importance of knowing the origin of sin to the world. And the defectiveness of the light of nature as to this.

IT is not more clear that the sun shines, than that the whole world lies in wickedness. The creation groans under the weight of this unwieldy load, which lies so heavy upon it, that it is the wonder, of all who have any right notions of the justice or holiness of God, that it has not sunk it into nothing, or exquisite misery before now. The heathens have made bitter complaints of it. And indeed if their complaints had been left upon themselves, and had not been turned into accusations of the holy God, none could have wondered at them, or condemned them. For it is manifest to any one who will not stop his ears—put out his eyes—stifle his conscience—forswear and abandon his reason, that the world is full of sin. What nation or place is free of idolatries, blasphemies, the raging of pride, revenge, perjuries, rapes, adulteries, thefts, robberies, murders, and other abominable evils innumerable? And who sees not, that all these are the effects of strong, prevailing, universal and contagious corruptions and depraved inclinations; from a share in which, no man can justly pretend himself free? And if he should, any one who strictly observes his way, may easily charge him, either with gross ignorance or disingenuity.

To know how things came to this pass with the world, and trace this evil to its fountain, is a business of great importance to religion. Yea,

of so much moment is it, that one can scarce tell how any thing like religion is to be maintained in the world, without some competent knowledge of it.

1. If this is not known, we can never make any right estimate of the evil of sin. If men were by their original constitution, without their own fault, made of so wicked or infirm a nature, as that either they were inclined to it, or unable to resist temptations, amongst the throng of which they were placed, it is impossible for them to look upon sin as so detestable an evil as really it is; or blame themselves so much for it, as yet they are bound to do. If it is quite otherwise, and man were originally upright, and fell not into this case, but by a fault justly chargeable on him, it is certain, that quite other apprehensions of sin should be maintained. Now such as men's apprehensions are about the evil of sin, such will their care be to avoid it, prevent it, or get it removed. And who sees not, that the whole of religion is easily reducible to these things?

2. If the origin of sin is not understood, man can never understand what he is obliged to in way of duty. If we derive this weakness, wickedness, and depraved inclination from our first constitution, we can never look on ourselves as obliged to such an obedience, as the rectitude, holiness, and purity of the divine nature, seem to render necessary. And if we are uncertain as to this, we shall never know how far our duty extends. And if we know not what is required of us, how can we do it? To say we are bound to obey as far as we can, is to speak nonsense, and what no way satisfies the difficulty: for this leaves us to judge of our own power, opens a door to man to interpret the frame of the law, as he pleases, and charges God with such folly in the frame of the law, as we dare scarce charge on any human lawgiver.

3. Without the knowledge of the origin of sin, we can never know what measures to take, in subduing our corrupt inclinations. If we know not of what nature they are, how they came to be so interwoven with our frame, and so much of a piece with ourselves, we shall not know where to begin attempts for reformation, or if it be practicable to eradicate them. And yet this must be done, otherwise we cannot with any show of reason project happiness. But the rise of corruption being hid, we shall neither know what is to be removed, nor where to begin our work, nor how far success to attempts of this kind may reasonably be hoped for. And of how destructive a consequence this is to all religion is easily seen.

4. If the origin of sin is not known, we will be at a loss what thoughts to entertain of God's holiness, justice, and goodness, yea, and his wisdom too. If our natures were originally burdened with those corrupt inclinations so twisted in with them, as now we find them; or if we were so infirm, as not to be able to resist a throng of temptations, among which we were placed, we will scarce be able to entertain such a high regard for God's holiness, goodness, and wisdom in our make, or of his justice in dealing so by us. And if we suppose otherwise, we will still be confounded by our darkness about any other way we can possibly think of, whereby things were brought to this pass, and mankind so universally precipitated into so miserable a case.

5. If the origin of evil is not known, we shall never be able to judge

what estimate God will make of sin : whether he will look on it as so evil as to merit any deep resentment, or otherwise.

6. Hereon it follows, that the whole state of our affairs with God will be quite darkened and become unintelligible. We shall not know whether he shall animadvert so heavily on us for our sins, as to ruin us, or so slightly pass over them as not to call us to an account. If the latter is supposed, obedience is ruined ; considering what man's inclinations and temptations are ; who will obey, if no ruin or hurt is to be feared by sin ? If the former is supposed, our hope is ruined. We shall not know what value God will put on our obedience, if this is not known ; whether he will not reject it for the sinful defects cleaving to it. Nor shall we know whether he will pardon us, or upon what terms, if we know not what thoughts he has of sin. And this we know not, nor can we possibly understand, unless we know how it came, and came to be so twisted in with our natures.

Finally, hereon depends any tolerable account of the equity of God's proceedings, at least of his goodness in dealing so with the world, subjecting it to such a train of miseries. If any thing of sin is chargeable justly upon man's make, and first constitution, it will be much to clear his justice, but harder to acquit his goodness in plaguing the world so. If otherwise, it will be easy to justify God : but how then were men brought to this case ?

Thus we have shortly hinted at those grounds that clear the importance of the case. An enlargement on them would have made the dullest understand, that without some satisfying account of the origin of evil, all religion is left loose. The judicious will easily see it. It now remains that we make appear the insufficiency of nature's light. To clear this point, it is evident, if we consider,

1. That most of the wise men of the world have passed over this in silence, as a speculation too hard and high. The effects of it were so sensible that they could not but notice them, as the Egyptians did the overflowing of their Nile. But when they would have traced these streams up to their source, they were forced to quit it as an unequal chase. The reason whereof is ingeniously, as well as solidly given by the judicious Dr Stillingfleet, "The reason was," says he, "as corruption increased in the world, so the means of instruction and knowledge decayed ; and so as the phenomena grew greater, the reason of them was less understood ; the knowledge of the history of the first ages of the world through which they could alone come to the full understanding of the true cause of evil, insensibly decaying in the several nations ; insomuch that those who are not at all acquainted with that history of the world, which was preserved in sacred records among the Jews, had nothing but their own uncertain conjectures to go by, and some kind of obscure traditions, which were preserved among them, which, while they sought to rectify by their interpretations, they made them more obscure and false than they found them."*

2. Others who would needs appear more learned, but were really less wise, offered accounts, or pretended to say somewhat, rather to hide their own ignorance, than explain what they spoke of. So obscure

* Origines Sacrae, lib. 3. cap. 3. sect. 8.

are they, that nothing can be concluded from what they say, but that they were ignorant, and yet so disingenuous and proud that they would not own it. Among this sort Plato is reckoned, and with him Pythagoras, who tell us, "That the principle of good is unity, finite, quiescent, straight, uneven number, square, right and splendid; the principle of evil, binary, infinite, crooked, even, long of one side, unequal, left, obscure."* Plutarch, as is noted by Dr Stillingfleet, says, that the opinion of Plato is very obscure, it being his purpose to conceal it; but he saith in his old age, in his book *De Legibus*, without any riddle and allegory, that the world is moved by more than one principle, by two at the least; the one of a good and benign nature, the other contrary to it, both in its nature and operations.

3. Another and perhaps the greater part, did plainly give the most absurd and ridiculous, not to say blasphemous, accounts of this matter. Some pretending all the evil inherent in matter, which they supposed not created. The folly, as well as wickedness of this opinion, is well laid open by the judicious person last quoted. This was what Plato aimed at, as Dr Stillingfleet clears from Numenius, a famous Syrian Platonic philosopher, who is thought to have lived in the second century, who giving an account of Pythagoras and Plato's opinions, says, "Pythagoras remarks, that in an existing providence evils necessarily operate, because there may be matter, and that matter may be endowed with evil. And the same Numenius praises Plato, because he assumes two great principles in the world; one beneficent—the other malignant, namely, matter! therefore, according to Plato, all the good things of God are brought together as by the liberality of a parent; but the existing evils arise out of the malignity of matter as its parent." The plain case is, they thought God and matter eternally coexistent, and that evil was inherent in matter, and that God could not mend it. To this purpose Maximus Tyrius, a Platonic philosopher,† who lived in the second century, speaks, that all the evils that are in the world, are not the works of art, but the affections of matter. Seneca says, *Non potest artifex mutare materium.*‡ This way the Stoics went, though they who have studied them pretend that there was some difference betwixt Plato's opinion and theirs. They who would desire a more full account, both of these opinions, and the absurdity and impiety of them, may have it from Dr Stillingfleet. But a great many of the philosophers plainly maintained two *anti-gods*, one good and the other evil. The Persians had their *Oromasdes*, to whom they ascribed all the good, and *Arimanius*, on whom they fathered all their evils. How many run this way, any one may learn from *Plutarch's Discourse of Isis and Osiris*, and judge whether he himself was not of the same mind. What was it that drove those great men on such wild conceits, which are so absurd that they are not worth confuting? Nothing else but their darkness about the rise of sin. And how dismal were the consequences of those notions and of this darkness! What else drove so great a part of the world to that madness, to worship even the principle of evil? Was it not this, that they entertained perverse notions about the origin of evils both of sin and punishment?

4. Not to insist on those absurd opinions, the latter accounts we

* Orig. Sacrae, lib. 3. cap. 3. sect. 11. † Max. Tyr. Ser. 25. ‡ Seneca de Provid.

have of this matter, by persons who reject the scriptures, after they have taken all the help from them they think meet, though they are more polished, are not one whit more satisfactory. For clearing this, we shall offer you the most considerable of this sort that have occurred to us. We shall begin with Simplicius, a Phrygian philosopher who lived in the fifth century, and was a great opposer of the scriptures. He, in his commentary upon the XXXIV chapter of Epictetus, speaks thus: "The soul of man is *Nexus utriusque mundi*, in the middle between those more excellent beings which remain above (which he had taught to be incapable of sin), with which it partakes in the sublimity of its nature and understanding, and those inferior terrestrial beings, with which it communicates through the vital union which it hath with the body, and by reason of that freedom and indifferency which it hath, it is sometimes assimilated to the one, sometimes to the other of those extremes. So that while it approacheth to the nature of the superior beings, it keeps itself free from evil; but because of its freedom, it may sometimes sink down into those lower things,"* and so he calls the "cause of evil" in the soul, "its voluntary descent into this lower world, and immersing itself in the feculency of terrestrial matter." Much more he adds; but it all comes to this, that because of the freedom of the will of man, nothing else can be said to be the author of evil but the soul. We have likewise an account from the Oracles of Reason much to the same purpose. A. W., a deist, in a letter to Charles Blount, answering an objection of Sir Charles Wolseley's, against the sufficiency of natural religion, gives this account. "This generally acknowledged lapse of nature, that it came, may be discovered by natural light; how it came, is reasonable to conclude without revelation, namely, by a deviation from the right rule of reason implanted in us; how he came to deviate from this rule, or lapse, proceeds from the nature of goodness, originally given by our Creator, which reason tells us to be an arbitrary state of goodness only; therefore not a necessary goodness to which our natures were constrained. In short, our fall proceeds from our not being able to reason rightly on every thing we act, and with such beings we were created; for all our actions are designed by us to some good which may arise to us. But we do not always distinguish rightly of that good. We often mistake apparent good for the actual good. We are deceived by the appearance of the right. The good that is pleasant, for want of right reasoning, is preferred to the good that is honest; and the present good, though it be less in itself, often carries it before the remote good, which is greater in its own nature. No man ever held that we could desire evil as evil; and therefore I will not grant him a total lapse in our natures from God. For we see many born with virtuous inclinations; and though all men at some times err, even the best, in their actions, it only shows that we were not created to a necessitated goodness. It is enough to prove no fatal lapse, that many are proved, through the course of their lives, more prone to do good than evil, and that all men do evil only for want of right reasoning; because the will necessarily follows the last dictate of the understanding."* The next and last whom we shall mention is, the learned Herbert, whom

* Comment. in Epist. cap. 34.

† Oracles of Reason, page 197.

the rest do but copy after. Thus then he accounts for it; "the evil of crime proceeds from no other source than from that will which is native to all; which the great God has bestowed upon us as an unparalleled benefit, from which also we are more distinguished from the beasts that perish, than by the intellect itself. The will, however, is so much in the equipoise between good and evil, that it is easily inclined to the one or the other, and so it happens, that it is often swayed by the bad, but is plainly to be considered in itself a divine gift of such value and excellence, that without the liberty of choice referred to, we are not capable of performing any thing really good: for who could be said to do that which was good, except he had also a choice to do that which was evil? Hence therefore it is, that the evil of crime arises from this noble faculty of the soul, being seduced, not by any external act of compulsion, but of its own accord, into that which is reprehensible."*

These three accounts, in several respects, run the same way. It were easy however to set them by the ears in some considerable particulars, and, perhaps, to show the inconsistency of the several authors with themselves, on these heads: but this is not my design to spend time on things, whereby truth will not gain much, as, perhaps, they contain the sum of what reason can say on the head, so we shall now show how very far they are from satisfying in the case. The substance of them may be reduced to those three propositions.

1. "That man's body sways the soul, to which it is joined, to things suitable to itself, which are evil." This Simplicius more than insinuates.

2. "That as reason is the guide of the will, which necessarily follows its last dictate; so the will's inclination to evil flows from our not being able to reason rightly. This the Oracles of Reason give plainly as a response in the words now quoted.

3. "The will is *incipitis nature*, perfectly indifferent, equally capable of, and swayed to evil and good." This all the three concur in. It is like a nice balance which stands even, but is easily swayed to either side. But now it is easy to multiply many difficulties against this account, and show how it no way clears, but rather involves the matter more. And,

1. I would desire to know whether that inferior part, the body, or terrestrial part of man, call it which you will, sways to any thing, not suited to its original frame and perfection, or not? If it aims at nothing, bends or inclines to nothing, but what is perfective of itself, I desire to know how that can be faulty? How can this body be made a part of a composition, wherein it is faulty for it to aim at what is truly perfective of its nature? How can it be criminal for the soul to aim at ennobling and satisfying the capacities of that which is so nearly united to itself? How is it consistent with the wisdom of God, to unite two beings, the one whereof cannot reach its own perfection without hurt to the other? If it is said, that it inclines to what contributes not to its own perfection; then I desire to know how it came to be so depraved as to have a tendency to its own detriment? How it was consistent with the wisdom of God to make it so? How was it consistent with the goodness of God to associate it, when so made, with

* De Religione Gentilium, cap. 13.

another more noble being to which it must prove a burden ; yea, which must sway to that which proves the ruin of the whole composition ? And how can man be blamed for doing that to which his nature inevitably must carry him ? For if he is thus compounded, his body, earthly part, or lower faculties, sway to evil : his will is equally inclinable to both ; and in this case, how can the composition be otherwise than depraved ? For my part, I see not how it could be otherwise, or how God can justly punish it for being so, upon the supposition laid down.

2. If it be asserted that we are not, by our original constitution, able to reason rightly, in what concerns our own duty, as we have heard from the Oracles of Reason : then I desire to know if we are not necessitated by our very make and constitution to err ? If we are to believe, what the same Oracle utters, that the will must follow necessarily the understanding ; then I desire to know if we are not necessitated to sin ? If things are thus and thus, we must either believe them to be, or believe that this Oracle gives a false response : then I desire to know how God could make us necessarily evil ? How can this be reconciled with the rest of this doctrine, about the arbitrary state of man's goodness ? I might ask not a few other queries, but perhaps these will suffice.

3. If the will be, in its own nature, perfectly free and indifferent, then I desire to know, whether there is any thing in that composition whereof it is a part, or that to which it is joined or any thing in the circumstances wherein man is placed, swaying it to the worst side ? If there is any thing either in man's constitution or circumstances, swaying him wrong ; then I desire to know, is there any thing to balance them ? Whether there is or is not any thing to keep him even ? I would desire to know how any thing came to be in his constitution, to sway him wrong ? If there is any thing to balance these inducements to sin, or inclinations, then man is perfectly indifferent still. And about this we shall speak anon. If there is a will, equally capable of good and evil, and man has somewhat in his constitution or circumstances, at least swaying him to evil, then I desire to know, how it was possible for him to evade it ? If he has nothing determining him more to evil than to good, or if any thing that inclines to evil is balanced by other things of no less force, determining and swaying him to good, then many things may be inquired : how comes it to pass, that though man is equally inclinable to good or evil, that all men almost choose evil ? Yea, I need not put an almost to it. It is a strange thing to suppose all men equally disposed to good or evil, and yet none choose the good.

4. I do not know how this notion of man's liberty, which is easily granted to be in itself, if the notion of it is rightly stated, a perfection, will take with considerate men, that it consists in a perfect indifferency to good or evil : for if this is a necessary perfection of the rational nature, without which it cannot be called good, as Herbert clearly asserts in his words above quoted ; then I ask, what shall become of those natures unalterably good, of which Simplicius talks ? Is it absurd to suppose, that there may be such ? Are they, if they be, less perfect, because incapable of that which debases and depraves them ? Is God good, who has beyond dispute no such liberty as this ? Is an indifferency to commit sin, or not to commit sin, a great perfection ? If it be, is it greater than not to be capable of sinning ? They may embrace this notion

of liberty who will, and fancy themselves perfect, I shall not for this reckon them so.

5. This account of man as equally inclined to good or evil, is either an account of man's case as he now is, or as at first made. If man is now otherwise, to wit, inclined more to evil than good, how came he to be so? This is the difficulty we desire to be satisfied about. If this be the case he was made in, and still continues in, then I say, it is utterly false, and contradictory to the ears, eyes, and conscience of all the world. Who sees not that man is plainly, strongly, and, I may add, universally inclined to evil? The wiser heathens have owned it. And it is plainly made out against the most impudent denier. Hierocles's words, as I find them translated by an excellent person, are memorable to this purpose. "Man," says he, "is of his own motion inclined to follow the evil and leave the good. There is a certain strife bred in his affections; he hath a free will, which he abuseth, binding himself wholly to encounter the laws of God. And this freedom itself is nothing else but a willingness to admit that which is not good, rather than otherwise."* This is a true state of the matter from a heathen.

6. The supposition of man's being made perfectly indifferent is injurious to God, who cannot be supposed, without reflection on him, to have put man in such a case. The least that can be said, preserving the honour due to the divine excellencies, is that God gave a law to man, suitable to the rectitude of his own nature, and to man's happiness and perfection; that he endued him with an ability to know this law, the obligations he lay under to obey it, and the inducements that might have fortified him in his obedience against the force of any temptation which he might meet with. If this be not asserted, it will not be possible to keep God from blame, which all that own him are concerned to take care of: for how could he bind man to obey a law, which he did not make known to him, or at least give him a power to know? If he laid him open to temptations, and made him incapable of discovering what might antidote their force, if he would use it, what shall we think of his goodness? Further, we must own that the will of man was made inclinable, though not immutably so, to its own perfection: how else was it worthy of its Author? Finally, we must own that man had no affection or inclination in him, that was really contradictory to that law which he was subjected to, and which tended to his happiness and perfection. If this is denied, then I ask, were not these inclinations sinful? Was that being worthy of God, that had no tendency to its own perfection? But on the contrary, what was inclinable to its own ruin?

7. This being the least that can, without manifest reproach to the wisdom, goodness, and justice of the Creator, be supposed in favour of man's original constitution; I desire to know, is this the case still, or is it not? If it is not, then how came it to be otherwise? How comes man originally to be worse now, than at first? How is this consistent with the principles of the deists that there is no lapse? If it be asserted, we are in the same state still, how then comes all the world to be full of wickedness? How is this reconcilable with the experience and consciences of men, that assure them of the contrary?

* Hieroclis Carmin. Aur. Transl. Reas. of Script. Belief, p. 116.

8. If it is thought enough to resolve all this, as to actual failings, into the choice of man ; yet what shall we say as to that darkness as to duty, which we heard the deists confessing, in their "Oracles of Reason?" How came that inability to reason rightly, which we have before demonstrated man under, and which our adversaries will own? Again, how come we to have vicious inclinations so strongly rooted in our natures? Strong they are; for they trample upon our light, the penalties of laws divine and human; yea, and the smartings of our own conscience. The drunkard and unclean person finds his health ruined, and yet, in spite of this, his inclination makes him run on in the vice that has ruined him: and the like is evident in other cases innumerable. Deeply rooted they are: they are some way twisted in with the constitutions of our body, and no less fixed in our souls. So fixed they are, that, though our own reason condemns them, it cannot remove them. Though sometimes fear restrains them as to the outward acts; yet it cannot eradicate the inclination. Instruction, and all human endeavours cannot do it. A famed Seneca that understood so much, who undertook to teach others, and perhaps has spoke and writ better than most of the heathens, yet by all his knowledge and all his endeavours, owns this corruption so deeply rooted in himself, that he expected not to get rid of it.

9. Not only so, but further, how came these inclinations to be born with us?—grow up with us? That they are so, is evident. We no sooner begin to act, than to act perversely. We no sooner show any inclinations, than we show that our inclinations are evil. Yea, among Christians, where there are many virtuous persons, who give the best example, the best instruction, and use the best discipline for the education of their children in virtue; yet we see the children discover inclinations so strong as are not to be restrained by all these endeavours, much less eradicated: and so early are they there, that they cannot be prevented by the most timeous care.

10. It will not help the matter to tell us, that there are some born with virtuous inclinations. For, 1. If all are not so, the difficulty remains. How came these to be born otherwise, of whom we have been speaking? How came their frame to be different from, nay, and worse than that of others! Are they under the same law? If so, why have they more impediments, and less power of obedience? 2. We would be glad to see the persons condescended on, that are void of vicious inclinations, that we might ask them some questions. You say you are born with virtuous inclinations. Well, but have you no ill inclinations? If you are no drunkard, adulterer, &c. yet have you no inclination to pride, prodigality, neglect of God, covetousness, or somewhat like? I fear the man that can answer plainly in the negative here, will not be easily found. And till we see him, we deny there is any such. 3. To confirm this, several persons, whom the world has looked on as virtuously inclined from their infancy, have, when seriously acquainted with Christianity, owned that they were as wickedly inclined as others; only by help of their constitution, they were not so much prompted to those evils, which are most observed and condemned in the world. And this account has been given by persons of judgment, whose capacity or ingenuity cannot reasonably be questioned. Finally, the ground whereon A. W. pronounces against

a universal lapse, viz. that we cannot "desire evil as evil," is ridiculous : for this is a thing perfectly inconsistent, not only with the due exercise, but the very nature of our rational faculties : and if notwithstanding this impossibility of any man's desiring evil as evil, so many are deeply corrupted, no imaginable reason can be assigned, why all may not be so, without supposing that we can "desire evil as such."

To conclude, then, it is upon the whole evident, that reason can never trace this matter to its proper source. Our consciences condemn us indeed, and so acquit the Deity. But without revelation, we can never understand upon what grounds we are condemned by ourselves, nor how the Deity is to be justified ; and so this sentence of our consciences involves the matter more, and increases the difficulty. It is not from any distinct view of the particular way how we come to be guilty, and how God comes to be free of blame, that conscience is led to this sentence. And therefore, how to come to any satisfaction about the matter, that may liberate us from the inconveniences above mentioned, which are really subversive of all religion, and can reasonably be supposed available to us, reason can never satisfy us.

Since these gentlemen, with whom we have to do, find it their interest to deny any lapse, I shall, to what has been said, add a short but judicious and solid confirmation of this, from a person of a more than ordinary reach, I mean Dr How : who, after he has quoted many testimonies, from heathen authors, proving this lapse, reasons for it, and confirms it further, from arguments not easily to be answered. His words run thus : "If we consider, can it be so much as imaginable to us, that the present state of man is his primitive state, or that he is now such as he was at first made ? For neither is it conceivable, the blessed God should have made a creature, with an aversion to the only important ends whereof it is naturally capable : or particularly that he created man with a disaffection to himself : or, that ever he, at first, designed a being of so high excellency as the spirit of man, to trudge so meanly, and be so basely servile, to terrene inclinations ; or, since there are manifestly powers in him, of a superior and inferior sort and order, the meaner should have been, by original institution, framed to command, and the more noble and excellent only to obey and serve ; as now every one that observes, may see the common case with man is.—And how far he is swerved from what he was, is easily conjecturable by comparing him with the measures which show what he should be. For it cannot be conceived for what end laws were ever given him ; if at least, we allow them not the measures of his primitive capacity, or deny him ever to have been in a possibility to obey. Could they be intended for his government, if conformity to them were against or above his nature ? Or were they only for his condemnation ? or for what, if he was never capable of obeying them ? How inconsistent were it with the goodness of the blessed God, that the condemnation of his creatures should be the first design of his giving them laws ! And with his justice, to make his laws the rule of punishment, to whom they could never be the rule of obedience and duty ; or with his wisdom to frame a system and body of laws, that should never serve for either purpose ! And so be, upon the whole, useful for nothing. The common reason of mankind teacheth us to estimate the wisdom and equity of lawgivers, by the suitableness of their constitutions to the genius and temper of the

people, for whom they are made; and we commonly reckon nothing can more slur and expose government, than the imposing of constitutions, most probably impracticable, and which are never likely to obtain. How much more incongruous must it be esteemed to enjoin such as never possibly could! Prudent legislators, and studious of the common good, would be shy to impose upon men, under their power, against their genius and common usages, neither alterable easily, nor to any advantage; much more absurd were it, with great solemnity, and weighty sanctions, to enact statutes, for brute creatures; and wherein were it more to purpose, to prescribe unto men strict rules of piety and virtue, than to beasts or trees, if the former had not been capable of observing them as the latter were not?*" I believe the deists will not easily overthrow this nervous discourse.

CHAP. X.

Proving the light of nature unable to discover the means of obtaining pardon of sin, or to show that it is attainable.

THAT all have sinned is sufficiently clear from the foregoing discourse. That it is of importance to understand the rise of sin, and that nature's light is unable to trace its original, has been likewise evinced. But all this were indeed less consideration, if the light of nature could assure us of pardon, or direct as to the means whereby it may be obtained. But here it is no less defective, than as to the former. That we are all guilty of sin, even the Deists do acknowledge; the Oracles of Reason own that all men sometimes err, even the best, in their actions. And the evidence of it is such, that none can get over the truth, if he is not plainly resolved to deny what is most evident. Now this being the case, that we have all transgressed; it is of the highest importance to know, whether God will pardon us, or upon what terms he will do it. If he punish us, what a case are we in. How can they who fear punishment expect rewards? But because this is a difficulty of no small importance, and the deists, since they see they cannot clear it, make it their business, to obscure the importance of the case, and render it more involved; we shall, therefore,

- I. State the case, and clear the importance of it.
- II. Discover the weakness of nature's light about it.
- III. Speak fully to a particular exception about repentance.

SECT. I.

Wherein the importance of the difficulty is stated.

IF the deists should allow sin to be so great an evil as we pretend it is, it would exceedingly embarrass them; therefore they labour to

* Dr How's Living, Temple part 2, p. 121, 122.

smooth the matter by telling us, that either it is no evil, or one of not so great consideration, as is commonly imagined: but the wildness and unreasonableness of this attempt will be easily removed, by a consideration of the evil of sin. It is not our design to write largely on this head, but only to condescend on a few of those considerations, whereon we insist for proving sin to be exceeding sinful: which although they are built on rational grounds; yet we are led to them by the assistance of revealed light.

1. Sin is a transgression of a law, the highest law, the law of the supreme and righteous Governor of the world. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. And such as the law is, such is the transgression. There is no more just way of measuring the evil of sin, than by considering the law it violates. The law bears the impress of the highest authority, that of the supreme ruler of the universe. Every transgression must therefore import, if not a contempt, yet certainly a want of due regard to this authority, which how criminal it is in man, who is as to being, preservation, and well-being, every way dependent, is easily understood. Moreover, this law is not a mere arbitrary appointment, but such as is the necessary result of the nature of God and man; and therefore the violation of it imports no less than an accusation of the rectitude of God's nature, whence the law results; and charges unsuitableness thereto, upon the nature of man, as being so made that, without wrong to itself, it cannot subject to the rule of God's government. And who sees not how deeply this reflects on God?

2. Sin contradicts the great design of man's being. God made us, and not we ourselves. It is blasphemy to allege, that infinite wisdom made so noble a creature as man without design. Nor can it reasonably be pretended, that the chief aim of God in making him was any other, than his having the self-satisfaction of having acted as became him, and having made a work every way worthy of his wisdom and holiness. And since man also was capable of proposing designs, it is foolish to imagine, that God either could or would allow him to make any other his chief end than the pleasure of God; or acting so as to make it appear, that he was every way worthy of his author. But when man sins, he plainly counteracts what God designed, and he was obliged to design: for he pleases not God, but himself; and this is, what in him lies to frustrate God of the design he had in his work, and debase the being and powers given him for the honour of God, by employing them against him, and using them in contradiction to his declared will.

3. Sin misrepresents God. The works of God bear an impress of God's wisdom and power. Man only was made capable of representing his moral perfections, his holiness, justice, truth, and the like. But when he sins, he not only fails of his duty, but really misrepresents God his maker, as one who approves sin, that is directly cross to his will, which is ever congruous to the holiness of his nature; or, at least, as one, who either wants will or power to crush the contravener; and so he is represented either as unholy or impotent; or one, who can tamely allow his will to be counteracted by a creature he has made and sustains. But what horrid reflections are these on the holy God!

4. Sin accuses God of want of wisdom and goodness in appointing laws which were not for his creature's good, and which he could not obey without detriment; of envy in barring the creature by a law, from

that which is necessary to his happiness; of insufficiency, to satisfy the creature he has made, while he is obliged to seek for that elsewhere, which is not to be found in him, in the way of obedience; and of folly, in making such a law as cannot be expected to be obeyed, in regard the creature subjected to it, gains more by breaking than by keeping of it.

Finally, to crown all, sin dethrones God, and sets the creature in his room. The honour of God's law and authority and the sinner's good are wickedly supposed to be inconsistent, and the latter is preferred. The will of the Creator and creature cross on one another, and the creature's will is preferred. The friendship, favour, and sufficiency of Deity is laid in balance against some other imaginary good, and decision is given against God. These are a few of the many evils of sin. They are not strained ones. This is not a rhetorical declamation against sin, wherein things are unjustly aggravated to raise odium against it; but a plain account of a few of the evils of it, which yet is infinitely short of what the case would admit. But who can fully represent the evil that strikes against infinite goodness, holiness, justice, wisdom, and supreme authority? Who can unfold its aggravations, save he who knows what God is, and what he is to man, and what man is, and how many ways he is dependent on, subject, obliged, and indebted to God? Well therefore may sin be said to have an infinity of evil in it.

The deists, to evade the difficulties arising from this evil of sin, take different courses. Some plainly deny any such thing as evil, or that there is any thing morally good or bad. Thomas Aikenhead, who was executed at Edinburgh, January 8, 1697, for his blasphemies, in his paper he delivered from the scaffold, tells us what his thoughts were in this matter, and upon what grounds they were built. When in his rational inquiries he came to consider, whether we were capable of offending God, he tells us, "that after much pondering and serious consideration, he concluded the negative.*" The famed Mr Hobbes was not of a very different mind, for he plainly asserts, "that there is nothing good or evil in itself, nor any common laws constituting what is naturally just and unjust: but all things are to be measured by what every man judgeth fit, where there is no civil government; and by the laws of society, where there is one. And elsewhere, before men entered into a state of civil government, there was not any thing just or unjust, forasmuch as just and unjust are the relatives of human laws; every action being in itself indifferent. And whether Spinoza was not of the same mind, is left to those to judge, who have time and leisure to trace his meaning, in his obscure and designedly involved way of writing. Mr Hobbes has been learnedly confuted by many, such as Dr Cumberland, Mr Tyroll and almost all who write of the law of nature. Spinoza has likewise been examined by Wittichius and many others. The first, viz. Thomas Aikenhead: his grounds I shall propose and examine.

The first in his own words runs thus, "I thought," says he, "a great part of morality, if not all, proceeded from the will of men, as of that of a kingdom, or commonwealth, or what most men think convenient for such and such ends, and these ends are always terminated upon being congruous to the nature of things; now we see, that, according to men's fancy, things are congruous or incongruous to their natures, if not to the body, yet to the thinking faculty.

* *Levia than*, Cap. 6.

The sum of this confused discourse, which probably he learned from Hobbs, amounts to this ; God has fixed no law to our moral actions, by which they are to be regulated. These, which are called moral laws, are only the determinations of governments, or the concurring judgment of men, concerning what they think meet to be done for their own ends. That what some judge meet and congruous, others may find unsuitable to their nature and ends and so are not obliged to obey. But, 1. Are not all these ungrounded assertions, whereof no proof is offered but the author's deluded fancy ? Has it not been irrefragably demonstrated by as many as discourse of moral good and evil, that antecedently to any government among men, we are under a law, the law of nature, and that this is the will of God ? 3. If all these had kept silence, does not the thing itself speak ? What can be more evident, than that there is a law of nature, and that this is the law of God ? We are certain, that we are made of rational natures, capable of laws and government. We are no less sure that God made us, and made us so. It is self-evident, that to him who made us, it belongs to govern, and dispose of us to those ends, for which we were made. And we by our very beings are bound to obey, submit, and subject ourselves to his will and pleasure, who made us, and on whom we every way depend ; and therefore his will, if he make it known, is a law, and the highest law to us. Again, it is clear, that this reason, if we attend to it, tells us that some things are to be done and some things left undone ; such as these, that we are to serve, love, obey, and honour him that made us, upholds us, and on whom we every way depend : that we are to carry toward our fellow-creatures, as it becomes those, who have the same original with us, who are subject to the same rule, are obliged to pursue the same ends, and that we are to dispose of ourselves, as the author of our nature allows us. These are all, if not self-evident, yet next to it, and easily deducible from principles that are so. Further, the reason that is implanted in us by God, tells us so, we are to take what it leads us to, while duly used, as the will of God, and so a law to us. " For whatever judgment God makes a man with, concerning either himself, or other things ; it is God's judgment, and whatever is his judgment, is a law to man, nor can he neglect or oppose it without sin ; being in his existence made with a necessary subjection to God. Such and such dictates being the natural operations of our minds, the being and essential constitution of which, in right reasoning, we owe to God ; we cannot but esteem them the voice of God within us, and consequently his law to us."*

What he tells us of men's different apprehensions, about what is right or wrong, makes nothing to the purpose. That only shows that in many instances we are in the dark as to what is good and evil, which is granted ; but will not infer that there is no fixed measure of good and evil. In many general truths, all who apply themselves to think, understand the terms, and have the truths proposed, do agree. And perhaps, all that is knowable of our duty by the light of nature, is deducible from such principles of morality, as all rational men who have them fairly proposed to them, must assent to. And deductions from laws, when duly made, are of equal authority with the principles from which they are inferred. And finally, when men in pursuance of their

* Sir Charles Wolsley's Scripture Belief, p. 32. 33.

perverse natures, follow what is cross to those dictates of reason, they are condemned by their own consciences, which shows them under the obligation of a law, and that acting in a congruity to their natures as corrupt, is not the standard they are obliged to walk by, since their own reason checks them for doing it. They who would desire to have this matter fully discoursed, may read others who have done it designedly, of whom there is great plenty.

His second reason runs thus: "Also we do not know what is good or evil in itself, if not thus, whatsoever can be attributed to God, that is good; and what cannot, is evil. And we know not what can be attributed to God, but such things as by a deduction we ascribe to him, we call perfect, and such as we deny to be in him, we call imperfect, and so we most ignorantly commit a circle. There is no other notion of things in themselves good or evil. It is much harder to find the sense of these words, if they have any, than to answer the argument. The design of it is to prove, that there is no standard whereby we may judge what is good and what is evil." The force of the argument amounts to this, that there is no way how we come to know any thing to be good, but by this, that it may be ascribed to God. But we cannot know whether it is to be ascribed to God, unless we know that it is perfect or good.

This is thin sophistry, which I might easily expose, were it to any purpose to discover the weakness of that which its author was ashamed of and disowned. As to the first proposition, that there is no other way to know whether any thing be good or evil, but this, that it can or cannot be ascribed to God. 1. The complex proposition is false; for there are other ways whereby we may know things to be good or evil. And this holds, whether we take it in a physical or a moral sense. We know that to be morally good, which God enjoins us to do. We know the will of God in some instances, from the natures God has given us; and from these instances, our reason can infer others. As to physical good, we know things to be good or perfect, by acquaintance with the nature of the things, and by the self-evident notions of perfection; for here are some things, such as dependence, subjection, and the like, which without any reasoning about the matter, we understand to be imperfect or perfect. As soon as we understand the terms, and know that a perfection is that which it is better for any being to have than to want: and then what these particular words, dependence, subjection, &c. signify. This alone overthrows his whole argument. 2. The maxim which he fixes as a standard; that is good, which may be ascribed to God, and that is not, which may not be ascribed to him: if it is taken in its full extent, it is false as to moral good; of which the only question is: for it is certain, that it is good for man to be a dependent, a subject, &c. which cannot be ascribed to God. If it is taken in a physical sense, it is not to the purpose: and besides, it would even in this sense need some caution.

As to his other proposition, that we cannot otherwise know what is to be ascribed to God, than by knowing that is good or perfect, it can scarce be supposed to speak of good in a moral sense; and in any other sense it is impertinent. If it is understood in a moral sense, it is likewise false, for we may know that things which are not in their own nature moral perfections, belong to God; such as power, omnipresence, &c. If it be understood in any other sense, we have nothing to do with it.

The next head that he adds is, "That all men will confess that any thing may be morally evil and good also, and consequently any thing decent or indecent, moral or immoral. Neither, though there were things in themselves evil, (if we do not apprehend other things instead of them) can we have any inclination thereunto? Otherwise the will could wish evil." But 1. Who will grant him (in any other sense that will be subservient to his purpose) that all actions are indifferent? I know none but men of his own principles. 2. As for what he pretends, that we cannot incline to that which is in its own nature evil, unless it be under the notion of good, I see not what this says for him; it is enough that we can do that action which is evil and prohibited, yea, and which we know is prohibited, to constitute sin, and make the sinner deeply guilty. But not to insist any further on this inconsiderable trifler, whose undigested notions scarce deserve the consideration we have given them; and much less did they become the awful gravity of the place where they were delivered. There are others of the deists who think it not safe to venture thus far: because in effect, this overthrows all religion and establishes plain atheism: yet they mince the matter and lessen sin as much as they can.

Herbert goes this way, telling us the sinner's excuse,* "That men are by nature frail and liable to sin; and they do not sin out of contempt of God, but for their own profit, while sin appears under the show of good. And although in this men are deceived, yet there is nothing done with any ill design against God."

A. W. in his letter to Charles Blount, pleads, "that though the offence is committed against an infinite being, we are but finite creatures who commit sin."†

But now, as to the first of these reasons or excuses, I fear, if it plead any thing, it casts the fault over on God. Are we to excuse ourselves from our frailty? Well, either we are made so frail that we are not able to obey, or we are not; if we are able to obey, then where is the excuse, when God requires no more of us than what he gave us power to perform? If we are not able, then how came God to subject us to a law we are not able to obey? If we have rendered ourselves unable, is not this our fault?

As to the second, "That we do not sin out of contempt of the Deity, but for our own advantage," I answer, 1. The principle the sinner goes on, according to this apology made for him, viz. That the thing he does, though it crosses the law of God, yet makes for his own advantage, is highly injurious to, and blasphemous against God; for it supposes that God has barred man from what contributes to his happiness, and supposes that more advantage is to be had by disobedience, which is a high aggravation of the fault.

2. I will not grant him, that there is no opposition in the heart to God. What though there be not plain, declared, direct, and open hostility? yet there is an alienation of affection, aversion from converse with, and a neglect of God to be found with all in more or less, of which their actions are a sufficient proof.

As to the third, "That an offence, though against an infinite God, is lessened by the consideration of the sinner's being finite," I answer, 1.

* De Relig. Gentilium, cap. 5. p. 199.

† Oracles of Reas. P. ———

This excuse pleads for all sin alike : for let the sinner sin never so deeply, yet he is finite still. 2. If this be well considered, it is perfectly ridiculous : for the measure of sin, its greatness is not to be taken this way, but the contrary : for provided the object against whom it is committed, is infinite, the meaner the person be that commits it, the greater still is the fault.

But in very deed, all these attempts to extenuate sin, as they are useless to sinners, who are not to be judged by man, but God, and not to be dealt with according to the estimate he makes, but that which God makes of sin ; so likewise they smell rank of the want of a due regard for the honour of the Deity, and are of the worst consequence to the world, since they tend to encourage sin, open a door to impiety, and embolden sinners to go on in courses they too much incline to. Besides, such excuses for sin do but ill become persons who make such a horrible out-cry against the doctrine of satisfaction upon all occasions, as having a tendency to make forgiveness cheap in sinners' eyes, and to embolden men to sin without fear. May not the charge be here retorted ? Who gives the greatest encouragement to sin, he that asserts the necessity of a satisfaction, or he who extenuates sin to that degree as to encourage the sinner to hope he may get off without a satisfaction ? I shall, to what has been said, subjoin a few words from a late discourse, if the quotation seem long, the excellency of it will easily excuse it ; besides, that it is so full to the purpose, and leads so directly to that which is the design of what hitherto has been said. " Furthermore, it is to be considered, that the rights of the divine government ; the quality and measure of offences committed against it ; and when, or upon what terms they may be remitted ; or in what case it may be congruous to the dignity of that government, to recede from such rights, are matters of so high a nature, that it becomes us to be very sparing in making any estimate about them, especially a diminishing one.—Even among men, how sacred things are majesty and the rights of government ? And how much above the reach of a vulgar judgment ? Suppose a company of peasants, that understand little more than what is within the compass of their mattock, plough and shovel, should take upon them to judge of the rights of their prince, and make an estimate of the measure of offences, committed against the majesty and dignity of government, how competent judges would we think them ? And will we not acknowledge the most refined human understanding as incompetent to judge of the rights of the divine government ? or measure the injuriousness of the offence done against it, as the meanest peasant to make an estimate of these matters in a human government ? If only the reputation be wronged of a person of a better quality, how strictly is it insisted on, to have the matter tried by his peers, or persons of an equal rank, such as are capable of understanding honour and reputation ? How would it be resented, that an affront put upon a nobleman, should be committed to the judgment of smiths and cobblers, especially if they were *participes criminis*, and as well parties as judges ? "

" When the *regalia* of the great ruler and Lord of heaven and earth are invaded, his temple violated, his presence despised, his image torn down thence and defaced : who among the sons of men are either great, or knowing, or innocent enough to judge of the offence and

“wrong? Or how fit it is, that it be remitted without recompence? Or what recompence would be proportionable? How supposable is it, that there may be congruities in this matter, obvious to the divine understanding, which infinitely exceed the measure of ours.”*

From what has been said, it is easy to understand the importance of the case. All mankind are involved in sin, lie under this dreadful guilt, and that not in one, but in many instances. Now if they are not sure that it may be removed, and know not in what way this is to be done; they must either not take up the case, or they must be under continual disquietments, dread the issue, and fear divine resentments. They can never expect any rewards for obedience, and consequently they must languish in it, and so all religion that can be available is lost.

SECT. II.

Showing the darkness of nature's light as to pardon.

THE importance of the case being thus cleared, we now proceed to demonstrate the insufficiency of nature's light to help out of this strait. And that we may without fear assert it so, is evident from the ensuing considerations;

I. That light which failed men so far, as to a discovery of the strait, is not likely to help them out of it. If we understand not where the difficulty lies, and how great it is, we are never likely to solve it. Now it is undeniable, that a great part of the world understood not the evil of sin, or of how vast a consequence it was, to be assured about the pardon of it. The prevalent darkness of their minds about the nature, holiness, and justice of the Deity; their own natures and relation to him; their ignorance of the nature of sin; the commonness of it in the world; their strong inclinations to it, and other things of a like nature, kept them from apprehending the difficulty of the case. But above all, the best moralists amongst the philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, seemed utterly unconcerned. And the reason is plain, their pride blinded them so, that they idolized their own virtues, and made no reckoning of their sins.

II. They who had a little more concern about sin, saw somewhat of the difficulty of this matter, but found themselves at a loss what way to relieve themselves; and therefore they had recourse, some to philosophy, music, and mathematics, for the purgation of their souls; and others to lustrations, sacrifices, and diverse washings, and I do not know what other fancies, which had no manner of foundation in reason, no suitableness to the nature of the difficulty, no divine warrant, and therefore were never able to satisfy the conscience, as to the sinner's acceptance with God, and the removal of the guilt. These being only the productions of their own imaginations, notwithstanding of all these, their fears continued, and they remained under apprehensions that even death should not terminate their miseries, as Lucretius himself writes, “The mind, conscious of guilt, alarmed at the consequences, inflicts pun-

* Dr How's Living Temple, part 2. p. 237, 238, 239.

ishment upon itself,—nor sees meanwhile where there is any end of its troubles, or termination to punishment, and even fears that these may be aggravated in death.”

III. They who either thought somewhat deeper of the case, or at least, seemed to do so, especially at times when the impressions they had of divine justice were quickened by some terrible plagues or judgments, had recourse to things that were so far from relieving, that they really increased the guilt, I mean that abominable custom of human sacrifices. This cruel custom, universally almost obtained in the world, if we may believe either profane or sacred records; of which Dr Owen, in his treatise of vindictive justice, gives many instances. They not only sacrificed men, but even multitudes of them. The instances of this kind in the sacred records are known. As to others, Ditmarus, quoted by Dr Owen, tells us, “that the Normans and Danes, every year in the month of January did sacrifice to their gods ninety-nine men, as many horses, dogs, and cocks.”* Clemens Alexandrinus, quoted by the same author, tells us what the usage of the nations in this matter was, and on what occasions. He speaks of one occasion on which there was a sacrifice of not less than three hundred men, and amongst them a king—as also that with one people particularly it was a customary thing to sacrifice the strangers that came amongst them.† And any one that will read there, will find how usual it was to sacrifice their children and nearest relations. The custom is barbarous, and fully speaks out the despair of men awakened to a serious consideration of sin, and the darkness of nature’s light. If it could have pointed to any other thing that could quiet the conscience, civilized nations, such as those among whom this custom did prevail, would never have had recourse to it.

IV. It is no wonder that men should be brought to such straits; for they wanted the knowledge of many things, that were of absolute necessity to make them once so much as understand what a case they were in. They knew not, nor, as has been proven, could they know the rise of sin, and therefore could not know what estimate to make of it, nor what God would make of it. They knew neither the extent of the mercy nor justice of God, without which it was impossible to determine in the case.

V. The questions that must be resolved before the mind of a sinner, that once understands his state, can be satisfied, are so many, so intricate, and so palpably above the reach of unenlightened reason, that it is foolish to pretend that nature’s light will or can satisfy the mind of any man in the case. Men may pretend what they will, who either do not take up the case, or who are otherwise themselves satisfied by divine revelation; but they who seriously, and without partiality or prejudice, view the case, will have other thoughts. Who will give me rational satisfaction as to those and the like questions? Whether, considering the greatness of sin, the justice, wisdom, and holiness of God, and the honour of his government, it is consistent to pardon any sin? If it be, whether he will pardon all, many, or few sins? What, or what degrees of sin he will forgive? Whether he will pardon without any reparation for the honour of his laws or not? Upon what terms he

* Dr Owen de *Justitia Vindicatrice*, cap. 4. p. 69.

† *Ibid.* p. 76, 77.

will do it? If he require reparation, what reparation, and by whom is it to be performed? How shall we know that he has pardoned? If he pardon, whether will he remit all punishment due to sin, or how much? Whether will he merely pardon, or will he over and above readmit the sinner to grace, and as entire favour as before he sinned? Whether will he not only pardon, but reward the sinner's imperfect obedience? Unless all of these are resolved, the difficulty is not loosed. And who will undertake to resolve them and give rational satisfaction that understand the cases.

VI. These questions are not only above the reach of man; but they belong not to him to judge and decide them. The offence is committed against God. He alone understands what the contempt of his authority, the disorder brought into his government by sin, and the disobedience of his creature amounts unto. What is fit to be done in the case, he alone is judge, at his tribunal it is to be tried. Man is too ignorant, too guilty, and too partial in his own favour to be allowed to judge. Now where are the decisions of God in the case to be found? Are they legible in the works of creation, or providence, or consciences of men? In the works of creation it cannot be pretended. The works of providence afford innumerable instances of his justice, some of his forbearing sinners, even while they continue in their sin, and loading them with outward effects of his bounty: but where is the sinner, of whom we can say, God has forgiven him? Or said that he will forgive? The consciences of men read them sometimes sad lectures of justice; but never, if they be not informed from revelation, any of forgiveness.

VII. All the pretences that are offered for relief in this case, are absurd, vain, and insignificant. They are all reducible to this one head, That God is infinitely merciful; but this gives not the least relief. For,

1. I ask, must God then of necessity exercise mercy, or is the egress and exercise of this mercy necessary? If it is not, but it still remains arbitrary, and in the pleasure of God whether he will pardon or not; then I inquire, where is the relief pretended; dose it not all vanish? Are we not as much at a loss as before, whether he will pardon, or how far, or upon what terms? If it is necessary in its egress, then I inquire, how is this reconcileable with the notion of mercy, that seems to respect voluntary and undeserved acts of favour shown to them, to whom God was not obliged to show any? How is this reconcileable to or consistent with justice, which is exercised in punishing sinners? By what arguments can this be made appear? Whence is it that there are so many acts of justice, and no instances known to, or knowable by the light of nature, of God's having pardoned any?

2. Mercy is either unlimited in its egress or it is not. If it is limited and cannot be exercised, but upon such and such provisions as make the exercise of it consistent with God's aversion to sin, and with the regard he has for the authority of his laws, the concern he has for the honour of his government, and his justice, wisdom, and holiness, then we are where we were before: for who can tell whether it be consistent with these things to pardon? In what case and upon what provisions? If it is not limited to any such qualifications, then I desire to know, how this is reconcileable to his nature? How is such mercy

consistent with any exercise of justice at all? What account can be given of the direful effects of justice, whereof the world is full? By what means can it be reconciled to the holiness of God's nature to pardon impenitent sinners? What need is there for any to guard against sin, since upon this supposition, all sin shall be forgiven?

3. Is infinite mercy universal in its extent? If it is not, then I desire to know what sins, what sinners shall be pardoned? How shall any know whether his sins are the sins that are to be pardoned? If it is universal in its extent, and all sins must be pardoned; then is there not a door opened for all sin? How can this be proven? Why have we no evidence of this in God's providential dealings? Whence have we so many evidences of the contrary? If it is said that mercy must in more or less be exercised toward all, then I inquire, who tells us so? How far shall it be exercised? Will it pardon all or part? Upon what terms? Will it not only pardon, but remunerate the guilty?

4. I inquire who are the proper objects of mercy? Or what is requisite to constitute the proper object of it? Amongst men the proper object of that mercy, which belongs to governors, is not sin and misery. To spare and pardon upon this score only, is a plain vice in men, especially in governors. But the object of mercy is such sin and misery, as is consistent with the honour and good of the governor, government, and the governed to pardon. Now, if it be thus in this case, then I see nothing, but we are where we were, and are plunged in all our former difficulties, and why it should not be thus, I see no reason. For there is no man who knows what God is, what sin is, what justice is, that will say it is consistent with the honour, justice, wisdom, and holiness of God to pardon impenitent sinners, going on in their sins. And when they say that his mercy only requires him to pardon penitent sinners, then this plainly says, that the exercise of his mercy is confined to those who are its proper objects, that is, not to miserable sinners, for the impenitent are most so; but to those whom he may spare in a decorum to his government and congruity to his other perfections. And indeed this is what cannot in reason be denied: and when it is granted, then it remains a question, not yet decided, nor indeed determinable by reason, whether repentance alone is sufficient to this purpose.

5. The case of justice and mercy are quite different as to their egress: for justice has respect to a fixed rule, a universal rule, and requires that regard be had to it, in dealing with all that are under that rule: whereas mercy only is conversant about particular instances, according to the wisdom and pleasure of him in whom it resides.

6. The infiniteness of either of these attributes, neither requires nor admits, that there be infinite numbers of instances of either: but that the acts of justice and mercy be such as become the infinite nature of God, when it is proper to exercise them, or when the wisdom, holiness, justice, or mercy of God requires that they be exercised.

But the Deists object, 1. That upon supposition that God will not pardon sin, there is no use of his mercy.* I answer, we do not say

* Aikenhead's speech.

he will not pardon sin ; but we say, nature's light cannot tell whether he will pardon it or not, or what is the case wherein mercy takes place. We own its use, but we say nature's light cannot tell when and how it is proper to exercise it. Again, it is pretended, that God is infinitely merciful, then he must as the least of its operations pardon the greatest of sins.* This is plainly denied, and we have told wherefore above. It is further pretended, "that justice has done its business, when it has condemned the sinner, and then mercy brings him off:"† but this is gross ignorance. It belongs as much to justice to take care its sentence be executed, as to see it pass.

Again, it is urged, "that though God be infinitely just as well as merciful, yet his justice is only as inherent, not as extensive as his mercy toward us: for we are punished only according to our deservings, but mercy is shown us above our deservings."‡ The first part is false. The very contrary assertion, viz. That justice is more extensive, is true, as has been cleared above, if we respect the number of objects. The proof of it is a plain sophism. For 1. It is not true that mercy bestows its effects, which in their nature are above our deservings, to more persons than justice gives its effects, which are according to desert. 2. The effects of mercy are not more above deserving, than the effects of justice are according to it. 3. The effects of justice are with infinite exactness proportioned to deservings. And all that can be said is, that the effects of mercy are suited to the nature of infinite mercy, not that they are given to an infinite number of persons, or infinite degrees.

Further, it is pretended, "that God with whom we have to do, is a father who will not animadvert severely upon his penitent son."§ I answer, as he is a father, so he is a righteous judge. Further, though he be a father, yet he is not such a father as men are, infirm, liable to failings, that needs his children, that may give them occasion or temptation to offend, that is of the same nature with them. And hence no firm argument can be inferred from any thing that is known in this matter by the light of nature. Besides, the meanest offence against God is more atrocious, than the greatest offence against one's natural father. For which nevertheless there is no forgiveness, but punishment without mercy, by the law of nations and nature.

Finally, all these are but generals, that may well raise suspicions in the minds of men ; but can never give particular satisfaction to any one man as to his case, or any one of the particular difficulties that have been mentioned. They no more satisfy, than those notions that generally prevailed, of the placability of the Deity, which had their rise at first from revelation, were continued by the necessity of sinners, who having challenges for sin, behoved to take sanctuary somewhere, and handed down by tradition: but being general, and leaving men at a loss about the means of atoning the Deity, were really of no use, if not to keep men from running into downright despair, and keep them up in an attendance upon somewhat that looked like religion ; but wherein the minds of such as really understood any thing of the case, could never find satisfaction. There is only one thing that seems of any

* Aikenhead's speech. † Ibid. ‡ A. W. in his letter, Oracles of Reason.

§ Blount, Relig. Laici, p. 69. Herbert de Relig. Gent. p. 199.

moment, that is objected to all this; and that is, that nature's light which discovers the sore, discovers a salve for it, to wit, repentance. To this we shall answer in the following section, that is peculiarly designed to consider this.

SECT. III.

Wherein it is inquired whether repentance is sufficient to atone for sin, how far nature's light enables to it, what assurance nature's light gives of pardon upon repentance.

It now remains that we consider the only exception, which is of moment, and that is, that repentance is a sufficient atonement—that the light of nature discovers this, and so we are not left without relief. This is the more considerable that several Christians, yea, divines of great note, and some of them deservedly of high esteem, have seen meet, in compliance with their several hypotheses in divinity, to drop assertions that seem to favour this. We shall first propose their opinions, who assert this, and then consider it.

The deists go all this way as one man. I shall offer one for all, and it is Charles Blount,* who not only speaks the sense, but translates the very words of the learned Lord Herbert. He tells us then, “that repentance is the only known and public means, which on our part is required for satisfying the divine justice, and returning to the right way of serving God. And for clearing this, he premises to it these ensuing considerations. 1. That he that judgeth man is his father, and doth look on him as a frail creature, obnoxious to sin. 2. That he generally finds men sin rather out of frailty, than out of any desire to offend his divine majesty. 3. That if man had been made inwardly prone to sin, and yet destitute of all inward means to return to him again, he had been not only remediless in himself, but more miserable, than it could be supposed an infinite goodness did at first create, and doth still perpetuate human kind. 4. That man can do no more on his part, for the satisfying of divine justice, than to be heartily sorry and repent him of his sins, as well as to endeavour, through his grace, to return to the right way, from which through his transgression, he had erred; or if this did not suffice for the making of his peace, that the supreme God, by inflicting some temporal punishment in this life, might satisfy his own justice. 5. That if temporal punishment in this life, were too little for the sin committed, he might yet inflict a greater punishment hereafter in the other life, without giving eternal damnation to those, who (if not for the love of goodness) yet, at least, upon sense of punishment, would not sin eternally. Notwithstanding, since these things may again be controverted, I shall insist only upon that universally acknowledged proposition first laid down.”† This proposition with the explications he translates from Herbert, only he has made some small additions.

It is no wonder to see those speak so; but it is a little more odd to

* Religio Laici. p. 68, 69, 70.

† Herbert de Relig. Gentil. p. 199.

hear Christians talk so. One who would seem very zealous for Christianity tells us, "That the God of patience and consolation, who is rich in mercy, would forgive his frail offspring, if they acknowledged their faults, disapproved the iniquity of their transgressions, begged his pardon, and resolved in earnest to conform their actions to this rule, which they owned to be just and right. This way of reconciliation, this hope of atonement, the light of nature revealed to them.—He that made use of this candle of the Lord, (*viz.* reason,) so far as to find his duty, could not miss to find also the way to reconciliation and forgiveness when he had failed of his duty."* Much more speaks he to the same purpose.

But it is stranger to hear divines speak so. And yet we find one telling us, "That the same light of nature, which declares to us our duty dictates to us, when we have failed in that duty, to repent and turn to God with trusting to his mercy and pardon, if we do so and not else. We do find it legible in our hearts, that God is good, and wisely gracious to pity our infirmities, to consider our lost estate, and necessary frailty, as that there is a God, and any worship that is at all due to him."† To the same purpose the learned Baxter speaks in his *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, part 1. chap 17. Dr Whichcot in his *Sermon Acts xiii. 38.* and others too large to quote. But now, with all due deference to those great names, I shall take leave to offer the following remarks, wherein I shall clear my own mind, and offer the reasons on which I dissent from them.

I. I observe that the deists speak more uncertainly about this matter; whereas these Christian writers seem more positive. The deists seem not to want their fears that repentance may not serve the turn, and therefore they seem willing to admit of temporal punishments, and even punishments after time, only they have not will to think of eternal punishments; as we heard from Herbert and Blount, who both speak in the same words on this head. But the Christian writers are positive. And I am jealous the reason is not, that they saw farther into the light of nature than the deists; but that they lean more firmly to the scripture revelation, which assures us that penitent sinners shall be forgiven. Though I must add, the scripture nowhere says that penitent sinners shall be forgiven upon their penitence, as that, which is sufficient to satisfy the justice of God. And to speak plainly, however confident those worthy persons are, that they have read this doctrine in the book of nature, I dare be bold to affirm that they had either failed in the discovery, or stammered a little more in reading their lesson, if they had not learned it before-hand out of the book of the scriptures; though the thing seems, when they have read it there, to approve itself so much to reason, that reason cannot but assent to it. It is well observed by one of those authors, with whom we now manage this debate, "That when truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in truth, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove, what at first we learned from others, we are forward to conclude it an

* Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 255, 256.

† Mr Humfrey's Peaceable Disquisitions, Chap. 14. p. 57.

obvious truth, which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings, that is once known; and because what we see with our eyes, we are apt to overlook or forget the help we had from others, who first showed and pointed it out to us, as if we were not at all beholden to them for that knowledge; for knowledge being only of known truths; we conclude our faculties would have led us into it without any assistance; and that we know these truths by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did, from whom we received them by theirs, only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one, as his private possession, as soon as he (profiting by others' discoveries) has got it into his own mind; and so it is: but not properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in what others have delivered, but their pains were of another sort, who first brought those truths to light which he afterwards derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far, in such a scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigour, little considering how much he owes to their pains, who cleared the woods, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable; without which he might have toiled much with little progress. A great many things which we have been bred in the belief of from our cradles, (and are notions grown familiar, and as it were natural to us under the gospel,) we take for unquestionable obvious truths and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt, or ignorance of them, had revelation been silent. It is no diminishing to revelation, that reason gives its suffrage too to the truths revelation had discovered. But it is our mistake to think that because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them.* How applicable this excellent discourse is to the case in hand, will appear from what we design to subjoin on this head. Though, after all, that which the scripture delivers, and reason confirms in this case, is not, "That repentance is sufficient to atone the justice of God, or that God will pardon a penitent sinner, merely on account of his penitence," which the deist's case requires. The scriptures plainly teach the contrary, and those learned persons, or some of them at least who own them, believe, according to the scriptures, the contrary, which makes a considerable difference betwixt them and the deists; though, in this case, they seem to speak the same things. But that which scripture asserts, is, "That penitence is a qualification suitable to a sinner to be pardoned, and that it is not suitable to the wisdom and justice of God to pardon one who is not sorry for former offences, and resolves to obey for the future." Reason confirms this indeed, but it is not to the purpose.

II. But to come a little more close to the purpose; this repentance, which is pretended sufficient, consists of two parts, sorrow for the offence, and a return to obedience. This last part, a return to obedience, what is it? Nothing, but only a performance of the duties we were antecedently bound unto by the law of creation, which only receives a new

* Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 279, 280, 281.

denomination from its relation to an antecedent deviation, or sin. This denomination adds no new worth to it, nor does the relation whereon it is founded. Wherefore we can never reasonably suppose, that there is any great matter in this, that can atone for the transgression. It is well if it obtains approbation as a part of our duty. But no reasonable man can pretend that it atones for any part of our sin.

III. Though the light of nature discovers our obligation to that duty which now, because sin preceded, must be called a return; yet it is a question, if nature's light is able to bring a sinner, that has once gone away, to such a return as is necessary. For 1. We have above proved that the light of nature is defective as to motives to obedience, as to the discovery of particular duties, and much more is it defective as to motives to a return: because there is more required to encourage a sinner to come back, who has once offended, than to engage him to continue. There is a discouragement arising from fear of punishment, and falling short of any reward he might have expected upon the account of his sin to be removed, and that is not easily done, as shall be shown. 2. Besides, not only discouragements lie in the way of a return, but cross inclinations, aversions from duty, and inclinations to sin. Now I am not satisfied that nature's light can remove, or direct how to remove these; of which we may speak more fully in the next chapter. So that as for this part of repentance, we neither see of what use it is as to atonement, nor do we find it clear that nature's light can bring any to it.

IV. The stress of the business then must lean on this sorrow for bygone transgressions, that is the other part of the composition. But here I am sure it will be readily granted, that every sort of sorrow for sin will not serve. If one is only grieved for the loss he has sustained, the hazard he has run himself into, and the evil he has to suffer, or fears, at least, for his offence; this can be available to no man. Wherefore though nature's light may bring a man to this, and has oft done it, yet this signifies nothing in the case.

V. The sorrow that only can be pretended, is that which arises purely, or at least, principally from concern for the dishonour done to God. Now as to this sorrow, it is to be observed, that it is not any action of ours done in obedience to any command: but it is a passion, in its own nature uneasy, as all sorrow is, though suitable to a sinner, and, upon the supposition, that he is so useful perhaps. And it results from the joint influence of prevailing love to God, his law and authority, and a clear conviction of sin's having injured his honour, and our being, on this account, obnoxious.

VI. It is not easily to be granted that nature's light can bring any man to this sorrow. Since 1. It is evident that the temper men are naturally of, is quite contrary to that which gives rise to such a sorrow. We are naturally averse from God, as shall be made appear afterwards, and are not under the influence of any such prevalent love to him, and it is not easy to prove that the light of nature is able to remove this natural aversion of the heart from God: but of this more in the next chapter. 2. God can never appear amiable to a sinner, if he is not revealed as one ready to forgive. We cannot be sorrowful for our sin, if we are not seriously convinced that we have sinned, and see the demerit of sin. If we are convinced that we have sinned, and deserve punishment, we cannot have prevalent love to God, which is requisite

to give life to this sorrow, make it run in the right channel, and proceed on those accounts, which will make it acceptable to God, or available to us, unless he appear to us as ready to forgive, which nature's light doth not discover.

VII. I doubt if the light of nature call us to repentance. I allow that there are several things obvious to nature's light, which may be said to drive us to repentance, because they serve to discover to us these things whereon this sorrow follows, bind the obligation on us to that duty, which, because of the preceding sin, is called a return, and serve as arguments to enforce a compliance, provided we had a call or invitation to return, I mean a new call. For clearing this, we are to observe that, were man innocent and guilty of no fault, and had his obedience no imperfection necessarily cleaving to it, and were he under no such inconveniency as might make him dread wrath, or fear his obedience might be rejected; in that case a discovery of the obligation he lies under to duty, were a call and invitation sufficient as securing him, at least as to the acceptance of his duty. But where there are those things in his case, sin and imperfection cleaving to the duty, and the performer chargeable with guilt on both those accounts, in order to engage him to duty, there is requisite a new call or invitation, securing him against those grounds of fear, and giving him ground to expect acceptance. Now it is such a call as this, that only can bring the sinner to repentance. And this we deny that nature's light gives; though we own that it discovers many things, that may be said, in some sense, to lead to repentance: because, upon supposition of such an invitation, they are improvable as arguments to enforce compliance with duty. Thus, if God invite me back again, his goodness discovered in the works of creation and providence, invites to go to him, and all the direful evidences of his anger against sinners persuade the same thing; and therefore may be said to lead, or rather drive to repentance; because they have a tendency that way in their own nature, and are capable of such an improvement: but still it is only upon the foregoing supposition.

VIII. To make this matter yet a little more clear, I grant that the light of nature discovers sinful man to be still under an obligation to obey God. As long as God is God, and man his creature, man is under a tie to subjection, and God has a right to man's obedience. This obedience to which man is bound, after once he has sinned, must be called a return. Further, the light of nature teaches, that if man had yielded perfect obedience, he should not have done it in vain. Acceptance at least, he should have had, and what other reward the goodness of God thought meet. And that man sustains a great loss by sin, that intervenes betwixt him and his expectations from the goodness of God, and besides, exposes him to the hazard of his just resentments, which, if it is seen, as by nature's light in some measure it may be, will occasion sorrow. Further, nature's light will teach that the more deeply we sin, the more we have to fear, and therefore out of fear and a regard to our own interest and expectation of being freed from those severer judgments, which a progress in sin draws on men, may be induced to return. Now all this the light of nature discovers, but neither is this sorrow, which favours of some regard to ourselves, but of little or none to God; nor this return, which is not that cheerful, cordial obedience that God requires and accepts, of any avail in the case. No

man, that knows what he says, will pretend, that such a sorrow or such a return is sufficient to satisfy the justice of God for by-gones, or even obtain acceptance for itself, which has so much of love to self, and so little of that which respects God.

IX. But the repentance that is available in this case is a sorrow flowing from prevalent love to God, and grieving, if not only, yet principally for the wrong done to God, and a cheerful following of duty upon prospect of God's being a rewarder of it. Now to call or to make up a sufficient invitation to a sinner, to such a repentance, it is requisite that God, 1. Be represented in such a way, as a sinner that sees himself guilty, can love him, delight in him, and draw near to him. But this he can never be, if he is not represented as one with whom certainly there is forgiveness. 2. It requires further, that God be represented as one who will accept of sinners' obedience, notwithstanding of their desert of wrath for former disobedience, and this requires still that he be a God that forgives. 3. Further, it is requisite, that he be represented as one, that will accept of obedience, not only from one that has sinned, but that implies sin and imperfection in it. Now this cannot be, if he is not known to be one that is plenteous in mercy and will abundantly pardon. Now I say the light of nature gives no such discovery of God: and therefore gives no call or sufficient invitation to this repentance.

X. Nor will it help out here, to say, that the light of nature doth represent God as placable, one who may be pacified: for, should I grant that it does so, yet this cannot invite to such an obedience, so long as 1. It is left a question, whether he be actually reconciled, or positively determined to forgive? 2. Especially considering, that he has not pointed to, and positively declared on what terms he will be appeased. Yea, 3. Since moreover he has given no visible instance, knowable by the light of nature, that he has forgiven any particular person. But 4. on the contrary, the world is full of the most terrible effects of his displeasure, and these falling most heavily on the best, even those who go farthest in a compliance with duty. In a word, these dark notions of a placable God, which yet is the utmost that unenlightened reason can pretend to, are utterly insufficient to bring any of the children of men to that repentance we are now in quest of; it is so sunk, and as it were quite obscured by cross appearances. And all that can be reasonably said, is, that in the providence of God there is such a seeming contrariety of good and evil, that men know not what to make of it, but are tossed by contrary appearances. And of this we have a fair acknowledgment by one, who, besides that he was a person of great learning, was not only a great stickler for the natural discoveries of this placability, but one of the first broachers of it, being led to it by the peculiar hypotheses he maintained and advanced in divinity, I mean the learned Amyrald.* After he has asserted the natural discoveries of this placability, and alleged that they lead to repentance, yet he subjoins, "But there are," says he, "motions in the corrupt nature of man which frustrate the effect, if God did not provide for it in another manner (that is, by revelation). For man flees from the presence of God through fear of punishment, and cannot hinder the prevalence of it in his soul; so that as a man affrighted beholds nothing steadfastly, but always imagines new occasions

* Amyrald of Religions, part 2. chap. 17. p. mibi, 253, 254.

of terror, and represents hideous phantasms to himself, so we are not able to allow ourselves leisure to consider attentively this dispensation of the goodness of God towards the wicked, nor thereby to assure ourselves of obtaining mercy and pardon. As a lewd wretch whose conscience bears him witness of many heinous crimes, though he should perceive some connivance in the magistrate for a time, and his judge show him some good countenance, cannot but be distrustful of him, and suspect that he does but defer his punishment to another time, and assuredly reserve it for him, especially if he hath an opinion that the magistrate is not such a one as himself, but abhors the wickednesses committed by him. Now we are universally thus principled, that as we have those whom we fear, so we never bear good will toward them of whom we have some diffidence. And the distrusting the good will of any one being a step to fear, is likewise, by the same reason, a degree to hatred; unless the distrust proceed to such a measure as to be an absolute fear: for then the coldness of affection is turned into perfect hatred. Wherefore man thus distrusting the good will of God towards him, consequently can have but a very slight affection to him; yea, he will even become his enemy, inasmuch as the distrust in this case will be extremely great." Thus far he. Now methinks this quite overthrows the placability he had before asserted, discoverable by nature's light, at least as to any use it can be supposed of, for assuring sinners of pardon, or inviting them to repentance.

XI. But to go a step further, I cannot see that the light of nature is able to give us any assurance of this placability. Where is it in the book of nature that we may read this truth that God is placable? Is it in the works of creation? No, this is not pretended. Nor, can it be, they were all absolved and finished before the entrance of sin, and cannot be supposed to carry on them any impressions of placability to sinners: Is it in the works of providence? Yes, here it is pretended. And what is it in the works of providence that is alleged to evince this placability? Is it that God spares sinners for some time, and not only so, but bestows many outward good things on them, whom he spares? Yes, this is that whereon the whole stress of the business is laid. But I cannot see the force of this to assure us that God is placable. For, 1. It is certain that the nature of the things do not infer certainly any such thing. Forbearance is not forgiveness: nor does it intimate any design to forgive. It may be exercised, where there is a certain and fixed purpose of punishing. And what relation have a few of those outward things, whereby love or hatred cannot be known, unto peace and reconciliation with God? It is, I know, pretended, that even this forbearance is a sort of forgiveness, and that all the world sharing in it, are in some sort forgiven. So Mr Baxter says. If this learned person or any other have a mind to extend the notion of pardon so far as to include even reprieves under that name, we cannot hinder: but it is certain, that no abatement of the punishment, far less the dissolution of the obligation, which is that ordinarily meant by pardon, do necessarily follow upon, or is included in a delay of punishment. The slowness in execution, which may proceed upon many grounds, hid in depth of divine wisdom from us, may be more than compensated by its severity when it comes. Leaden feet, as some have used the expression, may be compensated by iron hands. And

when men have seriously weighed outward good things, which are thrown in greatest plenty in the lap of the most wicked, are full of vanity and commonly ensnare. They can see but very little of any mercy designed them thereby. And if any inference toward a placability is deducible, which yet I profess I cannot see, I am sure that it is far above the reach of not a few, if not most of mankind, to make the deduction and trace the argument. And so it can be of no use to them.

2. All those things are consistent with a sentence standing unrepealed, and never to be repealed if either scripture, which tells us that God exercises much long suffering, and gives plenty of good things to the vessels of wrath; or reason, which assures us that persons continuing obstinate to the last in sin, cannot evade judgment, may be believed.

3. As there is nothing in the nature of the things that can ascertain us of God's placability, much less is there any in the condition of the persons to whom this dispensation is exercised. Were these bestowed on the most virtuous, or were there an increase of them, as persons proceeded in virtue, and came nearer and nearer to repentance; or were there on the other hand a continued evidence of wrath and implacability towards obstinate sinners, this then would seem to say somewhat. But all things are quite contrary, the worst have the most of them, and the best have commonly least of them. What? will the sinner say, that God is inviting me by his goodness to virtue? No, if I should turn virtuous I might rather expect to be worse dealt with. That is a bootless way for any thing I can see in it. Do not scripture and experience tell us, that thus things go, and that such use sinners have made of this dispensation? And so dark is it, that even they, who had God's mind in the word to unriddle the mystery, have been shaken at it so far, that they have been upon the very brink of apostasy, while they saw the way of sinners prosper, and that they who hate God were exalted. How then can unenlightened reason draw such inferences as these learned men pretend? Although I have a great veneration for these learned men: yet if it would not appear presumptuous, in one so far below in all respects, to censure his superiors, I would take the liberty to say, that in this matter they are guilty of a double mistake; first, in that they measure men's abilities by a wrong standard. What such men as they may trace by reason, many men are under not only a moral but even a natural incapacity to discover. It is certain, besides, that vast difference which is in the capacities of men, from different education and circumstances, whence it is morally impossible for one who wants that education, or the occasions and advantages which another has, to go the same length and trace these discoveries, which the other who had education and occasion may do; there is likewise vast difference even in the natural abilities of men (whether that arises from their bodies or souls I dispute not now, nor is it to the purpose: for if from either, it is still natural) so that one has not a natural capacity to trace the truths that others may, who have better natural abilities: and so it is naturally impossible for the former to make the discoveries which the other may. And I fear not to add, that if any such inferences may be drawn from these premises, as those learned persons pretend, yet many are under a natural impossibility; and the most under insuperable moral incapacity of tracing those discoveries. And if it be allowed that any man, without his own fault, is under an

incapacity of making such deductions, about the placability of God, from these dispensations of providence, which I think cannot modestly be denied, the whole plea about placability will prove not only unserviceable to deists, but, if I mistake it not, unmeet to maintain that station for which it is designed, in the hypotheses of the learned asserters of this opinion. Another mistake I think those persons guilty of is, that men whose minds are not enlightened by revelation, may possibly trace those discoveries, which they who are guided by it may read in the book of nature. 4. I add, if these things whereon they insist, as discoveries of this placability in God, serve to raise any suspicious of that sort in the minds of men, and this is the most that can be reasonably pretended, for demonstration they do not amount unto, they are quite sunk by the contrary evidences of God's severity; which must have so much of more force, inasmuch as they most commonly befall the most virtuous, which heightens the suspicion. And besides, as we heard Amyrald observe, the minds of sinners, who are convinced in any measure of sin, who are yet the only persons that will think themselves concerned in this matter, are much more inclined to entertain suspicious than good thoughts of him, whom they have offended, and who, as their consciences assure them, hates their offences. 5. That which puts the copestone upon our misery, and concludes us under darkness, is, that nature's light has no help to guide us over these difficulties laid in our way, from any known instances of any persons led to repentance by these means, or pardoned on their repentance. So that upon the whole, I cannot see sufficient evidence of this placability in the light of nature.

XII. If it is alleged here, that if God had no design of mercy in sparing the world, it is perfectly unintelligible where he did it. In answer to this, it is to be observed, that we do not say that God had no design of mercy in sparing the world, but that this his forbearance of the world is not a sufficient proof and evidence of this design; and that nature's light can give no satisfying account of the reason of this dispensation of God. So dark was this to such as had no other light, but that of reason, that the most part laid aside thoughts of it as a thing above their reach, and the more thoughtful knew not what judgment to make, but were confounded and perplexed in their thoughts. They understood not what account was to be made of God's producing so many successive generations of men, and tossing them betwixt love and hatred, hope and fear, by such a strange mixture of good and evil; effects of his bounty and evidences of his anger. Yea so far were they confounded, that some of them came the length to set God aside from the government of the world. This way the Epicureans went, some of them accused him of impotency. No less a person than Seneca introduces God telling good men, "That he could not help their calamities." And Pliny accuses God, under the notion of nature, of no good design, "nature has so cruelly counterbalanced its largest gifts with horrible evils, that it is hard to say, whether it is not a sad or cruel step-mother rather than a kindly parent to man." So that in fact, men were thus spared and left in this dark condition, as to the reasons of God's dispensation, is evident from experience. The reasons of this conduct are to be sought in the depth of the wisdom and sovereign justice of God. Christians who are found in the faith will own, that ail who belonged to the election of grace could not have come into

being, if the world had not been thus spared. They will own, that the world could not have been preserved in any order, without these effects both of bounty and severity, whereby some restraint was put on the lusts of men, and some government kept up among them, and they were kept from running to such a height in sin, as would have made it impossible for God, with any consistency to his justice, holiness, or wisdom, to have preserved the world, till his design in its preservation was reached. And it may be said further, for the satisfaction of Christians, (for the deists have no concern in this account which is bottomed on the revelation they deny,) that if God had seen meet to make all that belonged to Adam's covenant at once, they could not have refused to consent to the placing their happiness on that bottom whereon he placed it in the transaction with Adam, and could not have condemned God for executing the sentence upon all immediately upon the breach of it. And therefore I think they have no reason to quarrel God's keeping them out of hell for a while. Further, God in his wisdom, by leaving so many men in this dark case for so many ages, has let them see the shortness of their wisdom to disentangle them from that misery, whereinto by sin they were involved. It was in the wisdom of God, that the world by wisdom knew not God. Finally, this should make us welcome the gospel, which only can dispel the darkness we are under, as to the whole state of matters betwixt God and us, and lead us to life, and immortality, and mercy, pardoning mercy, which the dim light of nature could never discover to us.

Now if we consider what has been above discoursed, it will be found that we have made considerable advances towards decision of that which is in debate. We have cleared what that repentance is, which with any show of reason can be pretended available in the present case. We have evinced that the placability of God, of which some talk, were it discoverable by nature's light, is not sufficient to bring men to this repentance. Further, we have made it appear, that the evidences of this placability brought from nature's light, are not concludent.

But were all this given up, which we see no cause to do, the principal point is still behind, viz. "Whether the light of nature can ascertain us that all penitent sinners shall be pardoned upon their repentance." This the deists maintain, and we deny. Their assertion, "that the light of nature assures us that penitent sinners upon their repentance shall assuredly be forgiven," is that which we shall next take under consideration, and demonstrate to be groundless, false, and absurd by the ensuing arguments.

I. I reason against it from the nature of pardon. Forgiveness or pardon is a free act of God's will. It is a freeing of the sinner from the obligation he lies under to punishment, by virtue of the penal sanction of that righteous and just law which he has violated. All divine laws are unquestionably equal, just, and righteous, and their penal sanctions are so too. Certainly, therefore, God may justly inflict the punishment contained in the sanction of the law upon the transgressor; and consequently, we may without fear infer, that to relieve him from that penalty is a most free act, to which God was not necessarily obliged. And indeed, though all this had not been said, the thing is in itself clear; for we can frame no other notion of forgiveness than this, "that it is a voluntary and free act of grace, which remits the punish-

ment, and looses the sinner from that punishment he justly deserved, and which the lawgiver might justly have inflicted on him." Now this being clear, we subsume, that such acts cannot be known otherwise, than either by revelation, that is God's declaring himself expressly to this purpose, or by the deed itself, some positive act of forgiveness, which is the effect of such a purpose. The deists disown and deny any revelation. And for any effect declarative of such a purpose, we shall challenge the world to produce it. There never was nor is any one person, of whom we can certainly affirm, upon the information only of the light of nature, that God has forgiven him, either upon repentance or without it. And if there were such persons, it would not bear the weight of a general conclusion, that God has done it, therefore he will do it to all, in all other instances.

II. I reason against this supposed constitution from the extent of it, that God will pardon all penitent sinners. If this is not said, he pardons none upon their penitence: for if any penitent sinner can be supposed to remain unpardoned, why may not all? Besides, if a penitent sinner is punished, then it must be upon somewhat else than penitence that he who is pardoned obtains remission. For if mere penitence had been sufficient, a penitent could not have suffered. Now if all penitent sinners are forgiven, and the light of nature assures them that they shall be forgiven, then the extent of this constitution is very large. For, 1. It makes void the penal sanction of the law as to all sins, however atrocious they are, if the sinner is only a penitent. 2. It extends to all ages, places, and generations of men, that ever have been or shall be in the world. 3. It reaches to all sorts of persons, even those who are in capacity to introduce the greatest disorders into the government of the world, as well as the meanest offenders. Well then, the deists must maintain that it is thus enacted, and this act or constitution is in all this extent publicly declared by the light of nature, so that all may know it. 4. It reaches to all sins, past, present, and to come; they shall all be forgiven, if the sinner do only repent. Now against such an extensive constitution, we offer the following considerations;

1. All wise governors who have any regard to the honour of their laws, authority, and governments, use to be very sparing in indemnifying transgression. And no wonder they should; for wise and just rulers are not wont to enact penalties, but in proportion to offences. And therefore, a passing easily from them tends to make transgression cheap, and weaken the constitution, and so dissolve the government. Now God is no less tender of the honour of those laws, which enact nothing but what is the transcript of his own righteous nature, and the opposite whereof he has the deepest abhorrency of, as contrary to the same. And can we then reasonably suppose him to be so lavish of forgiveness as to establish it in so strange an extent? I believe it will be hard for any thinking man to judge so. 2. In all well ordered governments, pardon is a particular act of grace, restricted to some time, place, and person; yea, and crimes too: and therefore is never extended so universally as here it is, and if it is to the purpose must be asserted. So that the common reason of mankind declares against such a constitution; for what is or may be pretended of impenitent sinners being excluded, is, in very deed, no restriction of the law indemnifying transgressors of whatever sort, that are but willing to be indemnified.

For impenitent sinners are they only who have no will to be pardoned, or who will not accept of favour. Now to indemnify all that are willing to be pardoned is a very odd constitution. And before I ascribe this to the wisdom of the great ruler of the world, I must see better reasons than I am ever like to see in this case. 3. No wise government ever enacted pardon of such a universal extent, without further security for the honour of the government, into a perpetual and standing law. Pardon and acts of grace are a part of the sovereignty of the governor: and however he may make them very extensive sometimes, yet he always reserves it so in his own power, that it shall afterwards be voluntary and free to him to forgive or not as he shall see cause. 4. Such a constitution is especially irreconcilable with wisdom and equity, if it is extended to transgressions not yet committed; for in that case it looks like an invitation to sin. 5. And this binds more strongly, if the persons are strongly inclined to sin. 6. More especially such a constitution is never to be reconciled, with wisdom, if it is universally made known and published without any provision made for securing of the honour of the law, against any abuse of such grace. Now I desire to know if nature's light discovers such an act and declaration of grace. Where is there any care taken, or any provisos inserted in the declaration that can evidence the regard God has for his laws, and secure against the abuse of such kindness? Indeed the scripture discovery of mercy to penitent sinners, on account of Christ's satisfaction, fully removes all those difficulties which otherwise, so far as I can see, are never to be removed. And therefore I can never see how such a declaration could be made without the discovery of a satisfaction to justice, and reparation of the honour of the lawgiver and law, and security against abuse of grace. Remarkable to this purpose are the words of the learned and judicious Dr How, "That prince would certainly never be so much magnified for his clemency, and mercy as he would be despised by all the world, for most remarkable defects of government, that should not only pardon whosoever of his subjects had offended him, upon their being sorry for it; but go about to provide, a law should obtain in his dominions, through all aftertime, that whosoever should offend against the government, with what soever insolency, malignity, and frequency, if they repented they should never be punished, but be taken forthwith into highest favour. Admit that it had been congruous to the wisdom and righteousness of God, as well as his goodness, to have pardoned a particular sinner, upon repentance, without satisfaction; yet nothing could have been more apparently unbecoming him, than to settle a universal law for all future time, to that purpose, that let as many as would in any age to the end of the world, affront him never so highly, invade his rights, trample his authority, and tear the constitution of his government, they should upon their repentance be forgiven, and not only not be punished, but be most highly advanced and dignified."* Thus far he. In the subsequent paragraph he learnedly and judiciously shows the difference in the gospel proposal of mercy to offenders, from this supposed case of forgiveness without satisfaction.

III. I inquire, whether is it possible that there may be any crime so

* Living Temple, Part 2, p. 327.

atrocious, that it may be possible for God, in a congruity with his perfections, to punish, notwithstanding of the intervention of repentance? If there may be any such, then certainly it is not merely on account of repentance that sin is pardoned; and so a penitent cannot always be sure of forgiveness. Further; considering how grievous and sinful every transgression of God's law is, how can I be sure what sins are pardonable upon repentance, and what not? If it is not possible for God to punish any penitent, then 1. I would inquire what so great matter is there in repentance, that can bind God up from vindicating his honour against affronts already offered? 2. To what purpose was the penal sanction since, in the case it was designed. For when the law is transgressed, it may not possibly take place, but the execution is inconsistent with the nature of God. 3. How will this impossibility ever be proven? Repentance hath nothing in it so great to infer it: for in repentance no more can be alleged but a return to duty antecedently due. And as to this, we are unprofitable servants. And Christ has told us what reason tells us also, that we deserve no thanks for it. And as for the other part, sorrow for by-gones, it is the necessary result of that regard to the Deity, and knowledge of our own sin, that is likewise our own duty. Now what is there, in all this, that should be supposed to be of so great worth, that it must inevitably stop the course of justice? But here it may be objected not only by deists, but some, who are very far from favouring them, "That God cannot cast away from his love and felicity any soul, which truly loveth him above all, and which so repenteth of his sin, as to return to God in holiness and life.*

I answer, 1. The supposition that a sinner convinced of sin can repent without some security given as to pardon—can love God above all, and so repent as to turn to holiness in heart and life, appears to me impossible. Much less is it possible that an unconvinced sinner can repent. The reason is plain, a clear conviction of sin inevitably casts us under the deepest fear of God, and dread of punishment from him, which not only casts out that love, but draws on hatred, or at least, strong aversion; as we heard the learned Amyrald well observe in the words before quoted. Now, it is certain, that suppose one impossible, twenty will follow. 2. If the thing is not impossible, which I think it is, yet certainly it is a case that never happened, and is never like to happen. 3. Supposing it possible, it is a very bold assertion, that no crime, how atrocious soever, would justify the inflicting of the penalty contained in the righteous sanction of the law. 4. Much less then is it hard to suppose that it would justify God's denying any reward to the sinner, that he has so sinned. And if it is granted that penitence does not necessarily restore to a prospect of reward, all religion and encouragement to it is lost.—I cannot forbear quoting again the accurate and judicious Dr Howe's words, who after he has shown that our offences against God incomparably transcend the measure of any offence that can be done by one creature against another, presently subjoins, "Yea, and as it can never be thought congruous, that such an offence against a human governor should be pardoned, without the intervening repentance of the delinquent; so we may easily apprehend also the case to be such, as that it cannot be fit, it should be pardoned on that alone, without,

* Baxter's reasons of Christian Religion, part. I, p. 184, 180.

other recompence.*" Whereof if any should doubt, I would demand, is it in any case, fit, that a penitent delinquent against human laws and government, should be punished, or a proportionable recompence be exacted for his offence notwithstanding? Surely it will be acknowledged ordinarily fit; and who would take upon him to be the censor of the common justice of the world in all such cases! Or to damn the proceedings of all times and nations, wheresoever a penitent offender hath been made to suffer the legal punishment of his offence, notwithstanding his repentance? How strange a maxim of government would that be, "That it is never fit an offender, of whatsoever kind, should be punished, if he repent himself of his offence!" And surely, if ever, in any case, somewhat else than repentance be fitly insisted on as a recompence for the violation of the sacred rights of government, it may well be supposed much more so in the case of man's common delinquency and revolt from God.

IV. I reason against this position, from the consideration of the imperfection of this repentance, which, as it takes place amongst sinful men, is guilty of a double imperfection. Our sorrow and our return are imperfect in respect of degrees. Our relation to God and his to us requires the highest, the most perfect love, and the most cordial obedience. No less will answer our obligations. And our sorrow, if it is required, must be supposed likewise to be such as results necessarily from such a love. Now what can be more evident than this, that none of the children of men love God as they ought, and with that intention and vehemency, which answers their original obligation? and consequently their sorrow and obedience can never come up to it: for they being the result of this love, can never go beyond the principle, which influences them. Again, our return is liable to another imperfection, even a frequent interruption. The case is not thus, that we only once, through infirmity, make an escape; but even after our supposed return, it must be allowed that there will be after-deviations. And hence it becomes a question, how can we expect acceptance in our returns? How can our repentance, which answers not the demands of the law, and our ties to duty be accepted for itself? And if so, much more may it be a question, how can it be allowed sufficient to atone for other transgressions, yea, how can it be sufficient to atone for transgressions, which it takes no notice of? For there are such sins as by the light of nature we are never likely to reach the conviction of; and therefore it is impossible we should sorrow for them, or repent of them? However men may please themselves with a fancy of the sufficiency of their repentance; yet a sinner, that understands his own case, will never be able to satisfy his own conscience in this matter.

I know it is pleaded, "That we have a harder province to administer, than even the angels themselves; they not having so gross a body as we have, nor exposed to so much evil as we are. But God he knoweth our frame, and, upon that account, is not extreme to mark what is done amiss. A creature, as a creature, is finite and fallible: and yet we are not the most perfect of God's creation. Now, for fallible to fail, is no more than frail to be broken, and mortal to die. Where there is finite and limited perfection, there is not only a pos-

* Living Temple. Part 2, p. 240.

sibility, but a contingency to fail, to err, to be mistaken, not to know and to be deceived. And where the agent is such, there is place for repentance. Repentance is that which makes a finite being failing, capable of compassion. If repentance did not take effect, it would be too hazardous for a creature to come into being. If upon a lapse, an error, or mistake, we should be undone to eternity, without all hope of recovery: who would willingly enter upon this state?"* Thus speaks Dr Whichcote.

To this plausible discourse we answer, either this reasoning proceeds upon the state of things, according to the covenant of grace, and respects them who have laid hold on it, or it does not: if it does proceed on this footing, we say it helps not the deists; but if, as it seems, it be extended further, then I shall make the following remarks on it. 1. Although we have here many things prettily said, yet I cannot but deeply dislike the discourse, because it aims at the extenuation of sin, and pleads its excuse from our frailty. Now besides that this bears hard upon the author of our constitution, as if he had made it unequal to the laws he imposed on it; it is a foolish argument, because the case may be as much exaggerated on the other hand by representing the greatness of the lawgiver, the equality of the laws, and the ability of man, at least in his first make, to obey. And the one will not signify more to give us hope of forgiveness on our repentance, than the other will to make us despair of it. 2. It seems to reflect on God's different conduct with the angels that sinned, who had no place allowed them for repentance; for their frame was finite, and so frail and fallible. The little difference from the grossness of our bodies, if man is not supposed corrupt, and his body inclined to evil, makes no difference that can satisfy; for still we were under no necessity of sinning from our constitution, if it is not supposed corrupt. But to pretend that man was made corrupt, carries our frailty too far, to make it God's deed. We cannot plead, in excuse, any defects in our constitution, that God put not there. 3. It damns all human laws that spare not penitent transgressors. If it be said, that they are under a necessity to do it. I answer, whence doth this necessity arise? Is the honour of the divine law less dear to him and of less consideration, than the honour and rights of constitutions and governments? But further I desire to know, will necessity justify the punishment of the penitent? If not, then here it doth not justify: if it doth, who will assure me that there is not as great necessity for this course in divine as human governments? at least in some instances. And if in any instance the punishment of a penitent may take place, who will condescend where it may and where not? How likewise, can it be said, that penitence secures pardon? Further, 4. I say directly to the argument; If divine laws are as much adjusted to man's power, as the constitutions and laws of human government are (and they behoved to be so, with respect to his power in his first constitution, has been made appear) then it is no more hazardous to come into being, than to enter into human society, where frail man may, for a word or a deed, forfeit his own life unto justice and all the advantages of it, and beggar his posterity, and that without any prospect of relief by his repentance.

* Dr Whichcote's Select Sermons, part 2d, Sermon 2d on Acts xiii. 38, p. 322, 323.

If it be said, the punishments are greater in this case; I grant it: so are the laws too, and consequently the transgressions: and so likewise are the advantages of obedience; and without an injurious reflection on God, it cannot be denied that the laws are, as well at least, attuned to man's abilities wherewith he was created and subjected to them. 5. I do not see how it can be injustice to inflict a just punishment upon transgressors; and such of necessity, that is, which is included in the sanction of the divine laws. Nor does repentance make that execution unjust; which, without it, is allowed not only just, but indispensably necessary. This I might largely show, but others have done it well.*

V. The falsehood of this proposition may be further evidenced from the nature of the justice of God, that seems necessarily to require that sin be punished. For clearing this, I shall make the ensuing observations: in doing which, we shall aim at such a gradual progression as may set the matter in the best light.

1. Justice strictly taken, is that virtue of the rational nature, whose business it is to preserve, maintain, and be a guardian of the rights of rational beings. It is commonly designed a constant and abiding or fixed will of giving to every one what is their right or due. Whence it has been debated, whether in man there is any such thing as self-justice; because, according to this account of justice, it seems to be restricted to the rights of others. And this restriction has countenance given to it from that common maxim, that *volenti non fit injuria*, which is founded in this, that a man is supposed capable of parting, without wrong, with his own rights, and consequently is not capable of injustice towards himself. It is true, man has no rights, which he may not denude himself of by his own consent. Yet since man has such rights, though they are but derived ones, as also his being is, as he cannot denude himself of without fault, I see not but even such a thing as self-justice may take place among men: but whatever the case be as to men, there is certainly in God to be allowed such a thing as self-justice. For clearing of which, I observe,

2. That God, being the fountain of all rights, has certainly rights, which he can by no means denude himself of. He has a right of dominion over the creature, and to the creature's subjection, that he cannot part with. As long as there is a rational creature, it is, by its being inevitably subject to its Creator, and he cannot part with that right he has to govern it. "With the supreme proprietor, there cannot but be unalienable rights, inseparably and everlastingly inherent in him, for it cannot be, but that he, who is the fountain of all rights, must have them primarily and originally in himself; and can no more so quit them, as to make the creature absolute and independent, than he can make the creature God."† Hence inevitably there must be allowed self-justice, which is nothing else, save that fixed determination of the divine will, not to part with what is his own unalienable right, and consequently to maintain it.

3. This justice, in order to maintain God's right of government, obliges him to enact penal laws as the measure of the creature's sub-

* See Specimen Refutationis Crellii p. 100, 101, et seq.

† Living Temple, part 2, p. 270.

jection and obedience. A subject he cannot be without laws. And where the creature is capable of transgressing, laws cannot be such, without penalties. Without those, they were rather counsels, or advices, than laws; and the person to whom they are given is left at will to be subject, or not. And if God should thus leave the creature without a penalty, then upon transgression, the transgressor has slipt entirely out from under the dominion of God; for he is not actively, in that instance, subject to God. And neither is he passively subject, if there is no penalty. So that by this means God has forfeited or lost his right, which is impossible. There is no other imaginable tie of subjection, but either the precept or the penal sanction of the law, whereby rational creatures, as to their moral dependence, can be bound. Now if God part with the one by remitting the penalty, or enacting laws without it, and man cast off the other by disobedience, the creature is, at least thus far, independent. Which how absurd it is, it is easy to see. Wherefore, in case the creature is made, we cannot but suppose a law must be made to it. And if the creature is capable of violating that law, there must, for preserving that right, which God has to the creature's subjection, be a penalty annexed to that law. Whence it seems evident, "That God did owe it to himself primarily, as the absolute sovereign and Lord of all, not to suffer indignities to be offered him, without animadverting upon them, and therefore to determine he would do so.*"

4. The creature being made, justice requires that it should be under such a law as is enacted with a penalty, and such a law being now enacted, there seems to arise a double necessity for the execution of the law, in case of transgression. The one arising from the reason of the law, the other from the law itself. Since upon the grounds already laid down the law was necessary; the same grounds enforce the execution of the law: for when the case falls out, for which the law was provided, it is not merely the law or constitution itself, but the execution of it that secures the end. When the creature disobeys he has in so far renounced an actual dependence on, and subjection to the law-giver and law: and therefore it seems of necessity that either as to these actions he is not subject, or he must be subject to the penalty. Again, as the reason of the law enforces the execution, so does the law itself. For the law being once made, justice requires that its honour be secured either by obedience, or by the subjection of the transgressor to the punishment.

5. To proceed yet further, if the law is not executed, the design, even the principal design of punishment in this case, is not reached. It is not the only or main design of punishment or penal sanctions to reclaim the offender, or benefit bystanders, or secure the community. It is true, the penal sanction, or law enacting the penalty, is of use to deter from transgressing, and so is of use to the community, and all under the government; but the execution, if the sanction is punishment after this life, is of no advantage to the offender, nor is it instructive to bystanders, or the rest of the community, who do not see it, wherefore these are not the principal ends of punishment. Though it is to be observed, "That any public intimation that the penalty shall not be inflicted, could not but be of the worst consequence to the community, as rendering it

* Living Temple, part 2. p. 271.

vain as to all that use which it has of deterring persons who are under the law from sin." Yet I say, these are not the principal ends of punishment; but the satisfaction of the law-giver. For the case is not here, as it is in human governments, where the governor and government are both constituted for the good of the governed, which therefore must be the chief aim of all laws: but on the contrary, the governed are made, and the laws made, and penalties enacted for the governor, who made all things for himself. And consequently, the principal design of punishment is the securing and vindicating his honour in the government. Nor is this any such thing as answers to private revenge amongst men. "But that wherewith we must suppose the blessed God to be pleased in the matter of punishing, is the congruity of the thing itself, that the sacred rights of his government over the world be vindicated, and that it be understood how ill his nature can comport with any thing that is impure, and what is in itself so highly incongruous, cannot but be the matter of his detestation. He takes eternal pleasure in the reasonableness and fitness of his own determinations and actions: and rejoices in the works of his own hands, as agreeing with the apt, eternal schemes and models, which he hath conceived in his most wise and all-comprehending mind: so that though he desireth not the death of sinners, and hath no delight in the sufferings of his afflicted creatures, which his immense goodness rather inclines him to behold with compassion; yet the true ends of punishment are so much a greater good, than their ease and exemption from the suffering they had deserved; that they must rather be chosen, and cannot be eligible for any reason, but for which also they are to be delighted in, *i. e.* a real goodness, and conducibleness to a valuable end inherent in them."

6. As justice in a strict sense, of which hitherto we have spoken, as it denotes that rectitude of the divine nature, which is conversant about, and conservative of the divine rights, pleads for penal laws and punishment; so likewise justice in a large sense, as it comprehends all his moral perfections, holiness, wisdom, faithfulness, &c. and answers to that, which is amongst men called universal justice, pleads for the same: for so taken, it comprehends his holiness and perfect detestation of all impurity; in respect whereof, he cannot but be perpetually inclined to animadvert with severity upon sin; both because of its irreconcilable contrariety to his holy nature, and the insolent affront, which it therefore directly offers him; and because of the implicit and most injurious misrepresentation of him which it contains in it, as if he were either kindly or more indifferently affected towards it: upon which accounts, we may well suppose him to esteem it necessary for him, both to constitute a rule for punishing it, and to punish it accordingly; that he may both truly act his own nature, and truly represent it. Again, it includes, thus taken, his governing wisdom, which requires indispensably that he do every thing in his government so as he may appear like himself, and answerably to his own greatness; so as to secure a deep regard for his government, and all the parts of the constitution. In respect whereof, it might be shown, that the punishment of sin, or the execution of the penal laws solemnly enacted is necessary. Wisdom takes care that one attribute do not quite obscure another, and will not allow that he gratify mercy to the detriment of justice. Again, it includes his faithfulness and sincerity, which seem pledged in enacting the penalty for its execu-

tion. How is it consistent with them to enact such severe penalties, if he may remit them without any reparation made for the wrong done? Any one that would see more to this purpose, besides others, who have discoursed of vindictive justice, may peruse the learned Dr How's *Living Temple*, part 2d. chap. 6 and 7. who has learnedly discoursed and improved this subject. To whom we own ourselves indebted for much light in this matter.

Thus it seems evident, that whether we take the divine justice in this last and largest notion, as it is comprehensive of all the perfections of the Deity, or in the former and strict notion as it imports a virtue, whose province it is to take care of the preservation of the incommunicable rights of the Deity, and vindicate their honour; it seems necessarily to forbid the remission of sin without the punishment of the transgressor, or a reparation of the injured honour of the Deity.

If it is alleged, that by repentance the sinner returns to his subjection, and so the honour of God's government is repaired. I answer, that upon supposition of the sinner's return, its being a sufficient reparation of the honour of the Deity, there would indeed be no necessity for punishment: but this is the question, and the objection begs what is in question. The principle is now laid down clear, that justice however taken, must take care to preserve and vindicate God's honour in case of transgression. The penal sanction of the law tells us, that the punishment of the transgressor is that which wisdom and justice have fixed on, as proper for this end. There is no alternative save punishment or repentance. The law makes only mention of punishment. When therefore the objectors say that repentance is sufficient, we deny it. They do not prove it, nor can they. God, to whom alone it belongs to determine what is necessary for the vindication of his own honour, must determine the reparation: we cannot. Yea, it were presumption in angels to do it. God has fixed upon punishment. If he allow of any thing else, the light of nature does not tell it. Nor is there any thing in the nature of repentance, as has been above cleared, that can induce us to think it is sufficient to this purpose. The most virtuous, who must be supposed the penitents, if there are any such, meet with as heavy punishments in this life as any, which shows, at least, that God looks not upon their penitence as satisfaction.

VI. Against this proposition we reason thus, every man is endued with a power to repent when he pleases, or he is not. To assert the latter, were to yield the cause; for it matters not to the sinner, whether repentance be a sufficient atonement or not, if it be not in his power to repent. Besides, it is a question in this case of considerable difficulty, whether it is consistent with the perfections of God to give this power, till once his honour is secured by a suitable reparation for the injury done it by sin. If it is in the sinner's power to repent when he pleases, then again I insist: either God without impeachment of his justice may inflict the punishment contained in the sanction of the law on the sinner, notwithstanding of his repentance, or he may not. If he may, then the deists can never without revelation be sure that he will not inflict the punishment, which is what we say: nor will it mend the matter, that though God, without impeachment of his justice, may punish the repenting sinner, that he cannot do it without injuring his mercy; for what is contrary to one of God's attributes, is so to all: and

moreover, the justice of God in particular requires that each of the divine attributes have their due. But if it be said, that God cannot in justice punish the repenting sinner; then I desire to be satisfied, if this does not evacuate and make void the penal sanction of the law? For if every man hath a power to repent when he pleases, and this repentance stops the execution of the sentence, I do not see but any may offend without hazard.

All that can be said is, that God may surprise man in the very act of sinning, or so soon after it, that he shall not have time to repent, and so man's hazard is sufficient to deter him from sin. But to this I answer, that the consideration of this hazard can never have much influence on man, to make him refuse the gratifying of his senses, in which he finds so much pleasure, so long as in the ordinary conduct of providence he sees that God very rarely takes that course of snatching away sinners in the very act of sin, or so soon after, as to preclude repentance. It is not so much what God may do, as what he ordinarily does, that is of weight to determine men, especially when they have so strong motives to persuade them to the contrary, as the impetuous cravings of unruly lusts are known to be. This argument gives us a clear view how much the deists' notion of pardon upon mere repentance favours sin; and how unreasonable the outcries of Herbert and Blount, repeated even to disgust, against the maintainers of satisfaction really are. They say, the doctrine of satisfaction makes sin cheap. But whether do they who say that sin cannot be pardoned without the sinner's repentance and satisfaction, or they who assert repentance alone sufficient, make sin cheapest?

VII. I further argue against this doctrine, that this constitution, grant, or allowance of repentance, in case of transgression, is either coeval to the law, and has its rise as the law hath, in the relation betwixt God and man and their natures, as being a necessary result of them; or it is a posterior establishment, and an act of free and gracious condescension in God, to which he was not necessarily obliged. If this last is said, then say I, this could not be known, but by a revelation or some deed of God, expressive of his mind in this matter. The first is denied by the deists; and we desire them to produce the work of Providence, whereon it is legible, that God, without any other reparation to his justice, for the injury done him by sin, will pardon the sinner upon his penitence and admit him to bliss. For though we should admit that some works of Providence singly taken, without observing others which have a contrary aspect, have somewhat like an intimation of a placability, which we see but little reason to do; yet we deny positively that there is any that specifies the terms, or particularly condescends on repentance, as that whereon he will be pacified and reconciled to sinners. And if any will pretend to draw this from them, I wish they would essay it, and let us see of what form their procedure will be: perhaps they may prove that it is not consistent with God's attributes to pardon an impenitent sinner: but if they think thence to infer, that therefore it is consistent to his attributes to pardon one merely upon his penitence, they may make good the consequence if they can; they will find it harder than it appears.

If the former is said, that this constitution is coeval with the law, and is as much a necessary result of the nature of God and man, and

their mutual relation as the law itself; besides what has been said to demonstrate the folly of it, let these three things be considered; 1. The deists do and are obliged to say, that man is not now from his birth more corrupt than he was at first. 2. Man at his original was, and consequently according to them, still is endued with power, sufficient perfectly to know and obey the law he is subjected to. To say that he was subjected to a law, which he was not able to know or obey, is to accuse the Deity of folly and injustice; as has been made appear. 3. The law to which man is subjected, is exactly suited to God's great design, his own glory and man's happiness.

These being granted, I conceive it evident, 1. That nothing can be said more injurious to the glorious perfections of God, than that any of them gives ground of hope, far less assurance of impunity to man, if he break these laws, which are equally suited to promote God's glory and his own good, and which he wanted neither power to know nor obey. 2. Such a grant would be of no less dangerous consequence to man, because it could be of no other use, than to tempt to a violation of those laws, which it is so much his interest to obey. But some may say, it would be discouraging to man to think he were undone if he disobeyed in the least. I answer, this could be no reasonable discouragement if he was possessed of power perfectly to know and obey the law he was subjected to.

Again, it may be said, that it was necessary there should be such an encouragement to man; because though he were intrusted with sufficient power to know and obey the law of God; yet he was for trial exposed to a great many strong and forcible temptations to disobedience.

For answer to this, suppose two men equally able to know and obey the law; the one knows he may obtain pardon on repentance, the other believes himself irrecoverably lost if he transgress; I desire the objector, on supposition that both were attacked with a temptation equally strong to answer me seriously, 1. Which of those two would in all probability soonest yield; he that saw a probability of escape, or he that saw none? 2. Since the keeping of the law was highly advantageous to both, which of the two is the best state? he who has this strong motive to obedience, that he is ruined if he disobey; or he that hath this encouragement and enforcement of the temptation to disobedience, that he may disobey and escape? Nor will they evade by saying, that this constitution was knowable before but was not taken notice of till sin fell out: for if it might be known, all the inconveniences mentioned will follow. Besides, if it was taken notice of after the first sin, it might be a temptation to all succeeding transgressions. In fine, if this allowance of repentance be said to have the same rise with the law, and be equally necessary from the nature of God and man and their mutual relation; it is a plain dispensation with the law, and equally made public, being notified in the same way as the law is; which how it is consistent with the wisdom, holiness, and justice of God, I know not.

VIII. To add no more on this head, if this story about the sufficiency of repentance lies so open to the light of nature, whence was it that it was so little discerned? The name of it, in that sense and to that use we now speak of, scarce occurs amongst the ancients, if we

may believe Herbert, who read them all with great diligence, and with a design to find what was for his purpose. Speaking of their sins, he says, "Nor have I any doubt, but that the heathens repent of their iniquities, which it is admitted they accounted as so many evils, although the term repentance is not often found among authors in the same sense in which it is now employed." Why does not he doubt of it? The reason he goes on, is, because they used sacrifices. But I suppose for this very reason some do doubt if they thought repentance sufficient: but of this more by and by.* The philosophers neither taught nor practised it. It is true, Periander, one of the wise men of Greece, had this for his saying, Ἀμάρτων μεταβιβάσουσιν repent of thy sins; † that is possibly, leave them off. For who can tell whether he had a right notion of repentance, or of what avail he thought it? Seneca says, "He that repents he has sinned, is nigh being innocent." This is spoken with his usual pride that made him think little of sin. But where is the person that taught repentance, or offered to evince it sufficient to satisfy the Deity? Most of them contemptuously disregarded it. We find nothing like it in the practice of their best moralists; but on the contrary, they were so puffed up with their virtues, that they made no account of their sins. ‡ The priests taught not this doctrine, for they inculcated sacrifices as necessary to satisfy the Deity. And if we may believe no incompetent judge, both priests and people were persuaded that repentance is not sufficient to atone the Deity. It is Cesar, who tells us, that, "the Gauls were under the persuasion that the wrath of the gods could not be appeased except the life of man was offered for the life of man." † To which we might add many more testimonies to the same purpose. Nor do we find anything like this discovery among them; which is very strange in a matter of importance, if it was so clearly revealed. That which is most like what they would be at, is what we find in Ovidius, where, in Lib. 1 Eleg. 1. De Ponto, it is said, that "the gods lessen the severity of the punishment when the crime is repented of;" and in Lib. 1, Eleg. 7. that "although we merit not a little from evil deserts, yet we may cherish much hope from the goodness of the deity."

But this is nothing to the purpose: how many of the poets' notions, and particularly this one, were traditional! How evidently were their notions of all things about the gods suited to their own fabulous stories of the clemency of the gods. And besides, we have no assurance that he understood what we do by repentance. Nor indeed could he. But of this more anon.

Objections considered.

It remains now that we take notice of some considerable objections that are made against what has hitherto been discoursed by different persons, on different views and principles.

I. Say some, if the case is so apparent that all have sinned, and the relief is so hid, that nature's light could not discern it; whence is it that all men ran not to despair, and took sanctuary here? Whence is it that religious worship was universally continued in the world? Yea,

* Herbert de Relig. Gentil. p. 198. † Ibid. 197.

‡ Cesar de Bello

Gal. lib. 6. See Ouranus de Sacrificiis. lib. 1. c. 22.

whence is it that such a worship universally obtained, that seems founded on the supposition of a placable God?

To this specious argument we answer, that many things there are in nature, whereof we can give no satisfying account. And if there should prove something in morality too, not to be accounted for, it were not to be wondered at. But not to insist on this, I answer directly: A fair account may be given of this otherwise than by admitting what we have overthrown upon so many clear arguments. Towards which, we shall make the following attempt. 1. The natural notices of a Deity, that are inlaid in the minds of men, strongly prompted them to worship some one or other. From this natural obligation they could not shake themselves loose. 2. Their ignorance and darkness as to the real horror of the case, made them think little of sin, and consequently apprehend that it would not prove such an obstruction to acceptance, as really they had reason to apprehend it was. 3. All who allow of revelation, own that the revelation of forgiveness, as well as the means of obtaining it, was twice universal in the days of Adam and of Noah. 4. Though this revelation was in so far lost by the generality of mankind, that it could not be useful to its proper end, yet somewhat of it remained still in the world, and spread itself with mankind. 5. All sorts of men found their interest and account in keeping it up. The priests who engrossed the advantage of the religion of the world, found their gain in it. The politicians who aimed at the good of society, found it useful to their purpose. The poets who aimed at pleasing, found it capable of tickling the ears of a world involved in sin. And the people whose consciences were harassed with guilt of atrocious crimes, found some sort of relief. And what all found some benefit by, was not likely quite to be lost. The philosophers seeing the strait of the case, saw that they could not make a better of it, and so acquiesced. 6. Their profane conceptions of the deities, as if they were persons that allowed or practised their evils, did help forward. The gods which their own fancy had framed, they could cast into what mould they pleased, as it best suited their interest or inclinations. 7. Satan, who acted a very visible part among them, and bore sway without control, no doubt had a deep hand in the matter, and could variously revive, alter, and manage the tradition, natural notices and interests of men, so as to make his own advantage of them. Other things might be added, showing the concernment of the holy God in this matter, which I shall wave for some reasons that are satisfying to myself.

But what is said, I conceive sufficient to blunt the edge of the objection. I shall only subjoin the words of the learned Amyrall, who after he has owned the natural discoveries of placability; but withal shown their uselessness, and that they had no influence nor could have in the words formerly quoted, at length he moves this same objection that we have here proposed, and returns the answer, which we shall now transcribe, though it is somewhat long, the rather because it comes from a person not only of great learning, but one who owned placability might be demonstrated by the light of nature, and yet denies that it was the foundation of the religion that was to be found in the world. "But perhaps," says he, "it will here be demanded, whence then came it to pass that all nations have each of them had its religion? And why are not all men dissociated instead of hanging together into religious

society? To which I answer, that the mind of man is never agitated with the same emotions, nor constant in the same thoughts; the same passion not always possessing him, nor the same vice. They take their turns, or succeed and mingle one with another. Two things therefore have hindered that men, though possessed with fear, have not abandoned all service of the Deity, profaneness, and pride: God permitting the profaneness of some and the presumption of others to temper the terror of conscience. First, profaneness; because not weighing sufficiently how much God abominates vice, and how inexorable his justice is, they often have flattered themselves with this thought, that he scarce takes any notice of small offences, and such as are in the intention and purpose only, that is, in the affections of the will and not in actions really executed. Moreover, they thought he was not much incensed, but with crimes that turn to some notable detriment to the commonwealth, or carry some blot of infamous improbity. Although masculine lust was either justified or excused, or tolerated by the most civilized people of Greece. And they were sometimes so besotted in their devotions, that they thought not but crimes of the greatest turpitude, with no great difficulty, might be expiated by their sacrifices, lustrations, religious processions, mysteries, and bacchanal solemnities. On the other side, presumption; because not sufficiently acknowledging how much they owed to the Deity, they imagined that their good works, their offerings, and the exercise of that shadow of virtue, which they pursued, might countervail the offences they committed: so that when they were balanced together, there might be hope not only to avoid punishment but moreover to obtain recompence. Upon which ground it was that Socrates being near his end, and discoursing of the immortality of the soul, speaks largely of his hope, (in case the soul be not extinguished with the body,) to go and live with Hercules and Palamedes, and the other persons of high account. But as to asking God pardon of the offences he had committed, he makes no mention at all of it; because, though he spoke always dissemblingly of himself, he had in the bottom of his soul great opinion of his own virtue, and made no great reckoning of his vices, from which notwithstanding he was no more exempt than others. And had his life been of such purity, that the eyes of men could not discern a blot in it (although some have written infamous matters of him), yet when the account is to be made up with God, there needs another perfection of virtue than that of his to satisfy so exact a justice. But yet further, oftentimes these two vices of profaneness and presumption have met together in the same subject, and lulled men with vain hopes into absolute supineness. Whence the excess of fear hath been retrenched, which would otherwise have at last turned into despair, and consequently not only dissipated all communion in religion, but likewise ruined all human society. For fear restraining man on the one side from absolutely contemning the Deity by profaneness; on the other side, profaneness and presumption hindered it from precipitating men into that furious despair which would have overthrown all, and caused more horrible agitations in the mind of man, than ever the most outrageous Bacchides were sensible of. So that by the mixture, vicissitude, and variation of these diverse humours has religion been maintained in the world. But it is easy to judge how sincere that devotion was, which was bred of fear, (a passion that is naturally terminated on

hatred) self-presumption, and misapprehension of the justice of God. Whereas the certain knowledge of the remission of sins, of which the special revelation from heaven can only give us assured hope, is a marvellous powerful attractive to piety, out of gratitude towards so inestimable a goodness.”*

II. Some object against what has been proven, that God is good, compassionate, and kind. And that natures of any excellency take pleasure in exercising mercy, compassion, and kindness, and with difficulty are brought to acts of severity.

I answer, 1. The goodness, kindness, mercy, and compassion of God are a pretty subject for men to declaim and make harangues about. But when they are made, they are little to the purpose; for they are easily answered by a representation of the justice and holiness of God. And the difficulty is not touched, unless men can show how these seemingly jarring attributes may be consistent. 2. The inferences men must draw from such representations of the nature of God, are such as will cross the experience of mankind who want revelation; and see many effects of his bounty, goodness, forbearance, and patience, but none of his pardoning mercy; and many of his justice and holy severity. Wherefore we may leave this subject and proceed, though much might be said to clear how little all this is to the purpose. But we conceive this is apparent from what has been above discoursed.

III. It is said, “That the very command of God to use his appointed means for men’s recovery, doth imply that it shall not be in vain, and doth not only show a possibility, but so great a hopefulness of the success to the obedient, as may encourage them cheerfully to undertake it, and carry it through.”†

In answer to this, I have above cleared, that men are still obliged to obey; that there are many things, of which several are by him mentioned in the subsequent sections of that chapter, whence these words are quoted, which might be improven to excite man to a cordial compliance, in case there were a new, clear, and plain invitation to a return with hope of acceptance. And I admit, that to deny this, as he says in the words immediately preceding those now quoted, were to make earth a hell. Yea further, so long as men are out of hell, there is still a possibility in the case: but that there is any such invitation given, or assurance of a hopeful issue, or means directly and specially instituted by God, as means of recovery, knowable by men left to the mere light of nature, I deny: because I see not the shadow of a proof and evidence to the contrary that has been offered.

IV. It is alleged by the same author, that, “God’s commanding us to forgive others, encourages us to expect forgiveness at his hand.”‡

To this I say, 1. The learned person owns, “that from this it doth not follow that God must forgive all, which he bindeth us to forgive, for reasons he had before expressed.”§ 2. I say, that this, the command of God to forgive others, lies not so open to the view of nature’s

* Amyrald of Relig. part 1. chap. 7. page 254, 255, 256.

† Baxter’s Reasons of Christ. Relig. part 1. chap. 17. § 9. p. 186.

‡ Ibid. § 5.

§ Ibid.

light, as that every one can discern it. And besides, it admits of many exceptions, for aught that unassisted nature can discover. 3. It is restricted to private persons, and is not to be extended to public injuries done against government. 4. When it is found to be our duty by the light of nature, we are brought to see it by such reasons as these, that we need the like favour at their hands, that we are frail, &c. which gives us ground to be jealous that the like is not to be expected at his hand, with whom these things have no place, which are the reason of the law to us. So that from this, as it is discoverable by nature's light, no sure inference can be drawn.

V. It is objected, that sacrifices and all the religious services amongst the heathens, were only symbolical of a good life and repentance.*

To this I say, 1. If this were true, Herbert and the deists are much in the wrong to the priests who urged the use of them, as men who neglected to inculcate repentance. For any thing I can see, they were more commendable than the philosophers, who neither taught nor practised repentance, and vilified sacrifices. But 2. This is a scandalous falsehood: for there is nothing more evident, than that by the sacrifices they designed to propitiate the deities, and expected that they should be accepted in place of the offerers, and their death be admitted instead of what they had deserved themselves. See abundance of testimonies given to this by him to whom we referred, when we quoted Cesar's testimony to this purpose; I mean Outram. What, I pray, meant the custom that prevailed not only among the Jews, but heathens, of offering their sacrifices with solemn prayers to God, that all the plagues which they, or their country had deserved, might light on the head of the victim: and so they themselves escape? And hereupon they thought that all their sins did meet upon it, and defile it to that degree, that none, who had touched it, dared to return home till they had washed, and purified themselves. Suidas reports of the Greeks, "That in the following manner they imprecated him who was appointed as their yearly sacrifice for expiating their sins, *be thou our πειροψομα*, that is, *our safety and our redemption*, and thereafter he was thrown into the sea as a sacrificial offering to Neptune." Servius tells us of something similar, where, to stay the visitation of the pestilence, "one of the poor of the people offered himself as a victim and in preparation was fed for a full year with the public bread of the finest description. After this, being ornamented with vervain, and sacred vestments, he was conducted through the state, with curses heaped on his head, purporting that all the evils of the nation might fall upon him; and this done, he was thrown into the sea." But we have stayed too long in refuting this mad and ungrounded conceit.

VI. Some, to prove that the works of providence, particularly his forbearance to sinners and bounty to them, do call men to repentance without the word, urge the apostle's words, Rom. ii. 4. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" To this we answer,

1. Divines and these not a few, nor of the lowest form, do under-

* See A. M's Letter, Oracles of Reason.

stand this whole context of the Jews ; * and they urge reasons for it that are not contemptible. If this opinion hold, no more can be drawn from these words, than what has been already granted without any prejudice to our cause, viz. That this dispensation, where persons are otherwise under a call to repentance, gives time to repent, and enforces the obligation of that call they are under. 2. But to cut off all pretence of any plea from this scripture, we shall take under our consideration, the apostle's whole discourse from the 16th verse of the 1st chap. to the 4th verse of the 3d, and give a view of these words, and other passages insisted upon to the same purpose, with a special eye to the apostle's scope in the discourse, and the particular design of every passage. And this we shall undertake, not so much out of any regard to this objection in particular, but to obviate the abuse of several passages of this discourse of the apostle, by one with whom we shall have just now occasion to debate almost every verse in this second chapter. If therefore our resolution of the apostle's discourse seem a little tedious at present, this disadvantage will be compensated by the light it will contribute for clearing many of the ensuing objections. The apostle Paul Rom. i. 16. had asserted, that " the gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," that is, it is the only powerful mean of salvation to persons of all sorts: neither Jew nor Greek can be saved by any other mean. In the 17th verse, he advances an argument for proof of this assertion, which is plainly this ; that revelation, which exhibits this righteousness that can please God, and on the account whereof he accepts and justifies sinners ; and which exhibits the righteousness of God, which is the only righteousness, not upon slender, or conjectural grounds, but from faith, that is, upon the testimony of the faithful God, who can neither be deceived nor deceive us, proposes this righteousness to our faith, is the only powerful mean of salvation ; but it is the gospel only that doth reveal this righteousness of God from faith, or upon the credit of divine testimony unto faith: therefore the gospel is the only powerful mean of God's appointment.

This is plainly the apostle's argument ; and if we consider it, we will find it to comprise three assertions ; 1. That the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, and received by faith, is that on the account whereof sinners are accepted with and justified before God. This is one branch of his first proposition, which he designs to explain and confirm afterwards at length. Here he only confirms it by hinting a proof of it from the prophet Habakkuk's words, " the just shall live by faith," that is, faith receiving the righteousness of God revealed in the promise, is the foundation of all the godly their hopes of pardon, peace with God, grace to support under trials, and a merciful deliverance from them. As it is by these things they live in troublesome times, so it is the acceptance of this righteousness, that gives them any right to these advantages. 2. His first proposition implies this assertion, that this righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, is the only effectual mean of acceptance with and justification before God ; or, that there is no other way wherein any of the children of men may obtain those advantages, save this way of accepting by faith, the righteousness of God, upon the credit

* Turet, vol. 1, Loc. 1. Quest. 4.

or faith of his testimony; this is the other branch of his first proposition. 3. The apostle asserts in this argument, that the "gospel doth reveal this righteousness of God;" on which, and which only, acceptance with and justification before God are to be obtained, from faith to faith. This is the apostle's assumption or second proposition.

The apostle having hinted for the present, at a sufficient proof of the first of these assertions, as has been said, passes it. He lays aside likewise the third of these assertions, designing to clear it afterwards: and addresses himself to the proof of the second in the ensuing discourse from chap. i. verse 18. to chap. iii. verse 20. or thereabout. The proposition then which our apostle spends the whole context under consideration in proof of, is, "that there is no other way whereby a sinner can obtain justification before, or acceptance with God, but by faith:" Or that "neither Gentiles nor Jews can be justified before God by their own works." This he demonstrates, first against the Gentiles in particular, from chap. i. verse 18. to chap. ii. verse 16. according to our present supposition, or concession to our adversaries. Next, he proves the same in particular against the Jews, chap. ii. to verse 8 of chap. iii. And from thence to the close of his discourse he demonstrates the same in general against all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles.

First, then, he demonstrates against the Gentiles in particular, that they cannot be justified before God by the works they may pretend to have done in obedience to the law of nature, by the ensuing arguments, which we shall not reduce into form: but only propose the force of them, by laying down in the most natural and easy order, the propositions whereof they do consist.

I. The apostle insinuates, verse 18, That the Gentiles had some notions of truth concerning God, and the worship due to him from the light of nature, verse 18. though they imprisoned them: and what here he insinuates, he directly proves, verse 19, 20.

II. He asserts, that they did not walk answerably to these notices, but detained them in unrighteousness; that is, they suppressed, bore them down, and would not allow them that directive power over their practices which they claimed; but in opposition to them went on in sin. This he had intimated in the general, verse 18. and he proves it, verse 21, 22, 23.

III. He proves, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, especially by instances of spiritual plagues, the most terrible of all judgments, against them for their counteracting those notices of truth. This he had also intimated, verse 18. and proves it, verse 24, 25, 26.

IV. He shows, that the Gentiles being thus, by the just judgment of God, given up and left to themselves, did run on from evil to worse in all sorts of abominations; and thereby did render their own condemnation the more sure, inevitable, and intolerable. This he does from verse 26 to 32.

V. To confirm this further, verse 32, he shows, that the fact cannot be denied, in regard that they both practised those evils themselves, and made themselves guilty by their virtual approbation of them in others. Nor could it be excused, since they could not but know, if they attended to the light of nature, that such gross abominations are worthy of death.

VI. The apostle having in the last verse of chap. 1. mentioned this aggravation of their sins, that they were against knowledge, takes occa-

sion thence to proceed to a new argument, whereby the at once confirms what he had said about their sinning against knowledge, chap. i. verse 32. and further evinces his main point, that they must inevitably be condemned by a new argument, which he lays down in the ensuing assertions, either expressed or insinuated. 1. He takes notice, that the Gentiles, if he speaks of them, do themselves practise those things, which they judge and condemn others for. 2. He takes it for granted, as well he may, that he who condemns any practice of another, doth confess that that practice in itself is worthy of condemnation. 3. He hereon infers, that the Gentiles do practise those things, which, according to their own acknowledgment, are in themselves worthy of condemnation. Now this conclusion directly fixes upon them the aggravation mentioned in the close of the preceding chapter, *viz.* that they know the things they do to be worthy of death. And this sufficiently clears the connection. 4. He subsumes again, that the judgment of God being always according to truth, he will certainly condemn all, who do things that in truth are worthy of condemnation, verse 2. 5. Hereon, by an inevitable consequence, verse 3. he concludes, that God will certainly condemn the Gentiles, which is the main point. 6. As an inference from the whole, he concludes, that as any prospect of escape is vain, so they are precluded from all excuse, or shadow of ground for reclaiming against the sentence of God, which by their own acknowledgment proceeds only against practices, that are in truth worthy of condemnation.

VII. The apostle having thus locked them up, as it were, under unavoidable condemnation, proceeds, verse 4. to cut off their retreat to that, wherein some of them took sanctuary. They concluded, that God, who did forbear them while they went on in sin, and allowed them to share so deep in his goodness, would not punish them so severely. To cut off this plea, the apostle first taxes them as guilty of a grievous abuse of this dispensation, while they drew encouragement from it to go on in sin. 2. He argues them of gross ignorance of the genuine tendency of this dealing of God. To argue thus, "God spares me and is good to me, therefore I may safely sin against him and hope for his impunity in committing known sin against him," is mad and unreasonable. Reason would say, "God forbears me, and so gives me time; he adds to former obligations I lay under to obey him by loading me with new kindnesses, therefore I should be the more studious to please him, and avoid these things, which I know will be offensive to him, and be ashamed for former offences." This, by the way, is the full import of that expression, the goodness of God leading to repentance. But of this more anon. 3. Hereon, verse 5. he infers that their abuse of this dispensation and their not returning to obedience, or answering the obligations laid on them, increases their guilt, and so lays up materials for an additional libel, and a more highly aggravated punishment, verse 5.

Having thus shortly given an account of the scope and meaning of the words, I shall next lay down a few short observations clearly subversive of any argument that can be drawn from them. 1. None can say, that the persons, who were under this dispensation did, in fact, understand it to import a call to repentance. The apostle accuses them of ignorance of this, and of abusing it by drawing encouragement from it, that they should escape punishment, though they went on in sin. 2. It is plain the apostle's scope led him to no more, but this, to evince, that this dis-

dispensation afforded them no ground to hope for impunity, no encouragement to proceed in a course of known sin, that it did aggravate the guilt of their continuance in such sins, and enforce the obligations, they otherwise were under to abstinence from them and the practice of neglected duties. This is all the words will bear, and all that the scope requires. 3. The apostle is proving, as we have clearly evinced above, that the persons, with whom he is now dealing, without recourse to the gospel revelation, are shut up from all access to justification before God, acceptance with him, pardon and salvation; certainly therefore he cannot in this place be understood to intend, that these persons were under means sufficient to lead them to that repentance, upon which they might be assured of forgiveness and peace with God. 4. This same apostle elsewhere appropriates the call to repentance unto the gospel revelation, Acts xvii. 30. speaking to the heathens at Athens, he says,—"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Here it is plain, that men left to the light of nature, are left without this call, until the gospel comes and gives this invitation. 5. Wherefore we may from the particular scope of this verse, the general scope of the apostle's discourse, and his plain declarations upon other occasions, conclude, *First*, That the repentance he here intends, is not that repentance to which the promise of pardon is in the gospel annexed; but only an abstinence from these evils, which their consciences condemn them for, and the return to some sort of performance of the material part of known, but deserted duty. Frequent mention is made of such a repentance in scripture; but nowhere is pardon promised upon it. *Second*, This leading imports no more, but that the dispensation we speak of, discovers this return to be duty, and gives space or time for it. 6. To confirm what has been now said, it is to be observed, that our apostle acquaints us, that this forbearance and goodness is exercised towards the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rom. ix. 22. which sufficiently intimates that this dispensation of itself, gives no assurance of pardon to those who are under it, but is consistent with a fixed purpose of punishing them. Yet without this assurance, it is impossible there should ever be any call to repentance, that can be available to any of mankind, or answer the hypotheses of those, with whom we have to do.

VIII. In the close of verse 5th, the apostle introduces a discourse of the last judgment for two ends: first, to cut off those abusers of God's goodness from all hope of escape. He has before showed that they have stored up sins, the causes of wrath; and here he shows there is a judgment designed, wherein they will reap as they have sown. Thus the words following are a confirmation of the foregoing argument, and enforce the apostle's main scope. Secondly, he does it for clearing the righteousness of God from any imputation that the dispensation he had been speaking of, viz. his forbearance and goodness towards sinners, might tempt blind men to throw upon it: and this he does by showing that this is not the time of retribution, but that there is an open and solemn distribution designed, wherein God will fully clear his righteousness. To these two ends is this whole account of the last judgment suited. He tells them, that there is a "day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." While he speaks of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," he tacitly grants that by

this dispensation of forbearance, the righteousness of God's judgment is some way clouded under a veil : but withal he intimates that there is a definite time, a day fixed for its manifestation ; and that this day will prove a day of wrath, that is, a day wherein the vindictive justice of God will signally manifest itself, in punishing such sinners, as they were with whom he deals. In short, he acquaints them that the design of this day is to reveal the righteous judgment of God, that is, to manifest to the conviction of angels and men, the righteousness of God's proceedings toward the children of men, particularly as to rewards and punishments. It will be righteous, and therefore such sinners as they shall not escape. It will be revealed to be such ; and so all ground of calumny will be taken away. To clear this, he gives an account of the concernments of that judgment, in so far as it is to his purpose, wherein,

1. He teaches, that there will be an open retribution of rewards and punishments ; God will render, &c.

2. He shows, that God will proceed in this retribution upon open and incontestable evidence. He will render according to works. The persons who are to be punished, shall, to the conviction of onlookers, be convicted by their works of impiety ; and the piety of those, to whom the rewards are given, shall in like manner be cleared.

3. He acquaints them, that the distribution will be suitable to the character of the persons, the nature and quality of their works. He will render according to their works ; that is, evil to the evil ; good to the good. This is all that is intended by *κατα, secundum*, or according to : the meaning is not that he will render according to the merit of their works. For though I own, that God will punish according to the just demerit of sin ; yet that is not intended here by this phrase *according to works* : for the word, in its proper signification, intimates not strict or universal proportion betwixt the things connected by it ; much less doth it particularly import, that the one is the meritorious cause of the other : but the word is, in all languages, commonly taken in a more lax signification, to denote any suitableness betwixt the things connected by it. So our Lord says to the blind men, Mat. ix. 29. "According to your faith be it unto you." Who will say that any faith, but especially such a lame one, as we have reason to think they had, did merit that miraculous cure ; or that it was every way suitable unto it ? Since then the word of itself does not import this, it cannot be taken so here, unless either other scriptures determine us to this sense, or something in the context fix this to be the meaning of it. To take it in this sense as to rewards, is so far from having any countenance from other scriptures, that it is directly contrary to the whole current of them. And when the word is taken in this sense, then the scriptures plainly tell that we are not saved or rewarded by or according to our works of righteousness, but according to "his mercy through Jesus Christ," Tit. iii. 5, 6. Nor is there any thing in the text or context to incline us to take it in this sense, but much on the contrary to demonstrate that this is not the meaning, at least, with respect to rewards ; for to say, that the reward shall be given us according to our works, that is, for our works, as meritorious of it, flatly contradicts the apostle's scope, which is to prove, that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, do by their works merit only condemnation, and that none can expect upon them absolution, much less reward. Besides, the works here principally intended

are not all our works, nor these, which, if any had, would have the fairest pretence to merit, viz. the inward actings of grace, faith, love, &c. but outward works that are evidences of the inward temper and frame of the actors. This is evident from the word itself, from the particular instances elsewhere condescended upon, when the last judgment is spoken of, and from the design of this general judgment.

4. He shows, that this retribution will be universal, to every one, &c.

5. He illustrates further the righteousness of it, verse 7. by characterising the persons who are to be rewarded, they are such as do well, that is, whose actions openly speak them good, and evict the honesty of the principle whence they flow; they continue in well-doing; their walk is uniform and habitually good; flowing from a fixed principle, and not from an external, accidental cause; they continue patiently in this course, in opposition to all discouragements; nor do they aim at worldly advantage, but at that glory, honour, and immortality, which God sets before them. None but they, who are perfectly such, shall have a reward, if it is sought for according to the tenor of the covenant of works. In this sense not a few, nor they obscure interpreters, do take the words; as if the apostle had said, if there be any among you, who have perfectly obeyed, ye shall be rewarded: but whereas I have cleared that none of you are such, ye are cut off from any expectation of reward. But if the sincerity of obedience is only intended, then the meaning is, that God will of his grace, according to his promise, and not for their works, give the reward to the sincerely obedient; and thereby will openly evince his righteousness, in dealing with them exactly according to the tenor of the covenant, to which they belong; so that no person, who has any just claim to reward founded upon either covenant, shall want it.

6. To clear the glory of God's righteousness further, he specifies the reward, viz. eternal life, a reward sufficient to compensate any losses they have been at, evidences God's love to holiness and his regard unto his promises.

7. He, in like manner, clears the matter farther, by giving a description ver. 8. of the persons, who are to be condemned, which evinces the apparent righteousness of the sentence to be passed against them. They are such, against whom it will be made evident, that they have been contentious, that is, that they have opposed and suppressed the truths they knew, stifled convictions and detained them in unrighteousness: such as have not obeyed the truth, or walked up to their knowledge, but have obeyed unrighteousness, following the inclinations of their corrupt hearts. As if the apostle had said, the persons who are to be rewarded are of a character, that ye can lay no manner of claim to, but your character is perfectly that of those who are to be condemned.

8. He specifies the punishment, indignation and wrath.

9. To fix the truth and importance of this deeper upon their minds, he repeats and enlarges upon this assertion, ver. 9, 10. thereby assuring them that the matter is infallibly certain, and to give a further evidence of the righteousness of God, he adjects a clause and repeats it twice over, viz. first to the Jew, and also to the Gentile, wherein he shows the impartiality of God's proceedings. He will not suffer one soul, who has any just claim to reward, to go unrewarded, be he Jew or Gentile. He will not allow one sinner, to whom punishment belongs, to escape

unpunished. The Jews privileges shall not save them, if guilty, but judgment shall begin first at the house of God : nor shall the bare want of privileges prejudice the Gentiles.

10. To confirm this, he adduces an argument from the nature of God, ver. 11. viz. That with him there is no respect of persons, that is, no unjust partiality toward persons, upon considerations, that do not belong unto the rule, whereby the cause is to be tried.

11. To strengthen this, and obviate objections, ver. 12. he asserts, that God will proceed impartially in judging them according to the most unexceptionable rule. He will condemn the Jews for their transgressions of that law, which he gave to them. He will condemn the Gentiles, not for the transgression of the written law, which they had not, but for their sins against the law of nature, which they had. And so neither of them shall have ground to except against the rule, according to which God proceeds with them.

12. Hence he takes occasion, ver. 13. to repel an objection or plea of the Jews, who might fancy, that they should not be punished or perish, to whom God had given the privilege of the written law. To cut off this plea he tells them, that where persons expect justification by the law, it is not the knowledge of the law, or hearing of it, but obedience to it that will be sustained. Here he does not suppose that any shall be justified by doing the law ; nay, he proves the contrary. It is manifestly his design, in the whole discourse, to do so : but he shows, that the plea of the Jews, that they had the law, is insufficient, as if he had said, be it granted, that justification is to be had by the law ; yet, even upon that supposition, ye have no title to it, unless ye perfectly obey it. The law pleads for none, but those who do so. And since none of you do thus obey it, as shall be evinced anon, ye must perish, as I said, ver. 12.

13. Whereas the Gentiles might plead, it would be hard treatment if they should be condemned, since they were without the law ; he demonstrates, that they could not except against their own condemnation, upon this ground, because although they wanted the written law, yet they had another law, viz. that of nature ; for the breaches of which they might justly be condemned. That they had such a law he proves against them, ver. 14, 15. first, from their practice. He tells them that by the guidance of mere nature they did the works of the law, that is, they performed the material part of some of the duties, which the law enjoins, and thereby evidenced acquaintance with the law, or as he words it, " they show the work of the law written in their hearts," that is, the remainders of their natural light, or reason, performs the work of the law commanding duty, and forbidding sin. Secondly, he proves, that they have such a law from the working of their conscience. He whose conscience accuses him for not doing some things, and approves him for doing other things, knows that he was obliged to do the one and omit the other, and consequently has some knowledge of the law. This is the apostle's scope, ver. 14, 15. So that for, in the beginning of ver. 14. refers to and renders a reason of the first clause of ver. 12. that they who had " sinned without the law, viz. the written law, shall perish without the law," that is, not for violating the written law, which they had not.

14. Having removed these objections, he concludes his account of

the last judgment, ver. 16. wherein he gives them an account to whom it belongs originally to judge, it is God. *2dly*, who the person is to whom the visible administration is committed, it is Jesus Christ. *3dly*, What the matter of that judgment is, or what will be judged, it is the secrets of hearts. Although works will be insisted upon as evidences for the conviction of onlookers of the righteousness of God, in his distribution of rewards and punishments; yet the secrets of men will also be laid open, for the further confession of sinners, and justification of the severity of God against them.

II. Now the apostle having proven, that the Gentiles are all under condemnation, and so cannot be justified by any works they can do; and having likewise removed the Jews that fell in his way, he proceeds next directly to prove the same against the Jews in particular, and answers their objections from chap. ii. ver. 17 to chap. iii. ver. 8. inclusive.

To prove his charge against the Jews, he makes use only of one argument, which is yet capable of bearing the weight of many conclusions or inferences. To understand this, we must take notice, that the apostle here is dealing with those Jews, who sought to be justified by works. And, 1. by way of concession, he grants them several privileges above the Gentiles from verse 17. to verse 20. inclusive, *viz.* that they were called Jews; that they had the law, on which they rested, and pretended some peculiar interest in God, as being externally in covenant with him, verse 17. of which they boasted; that they had some knowledge of the law, and pretended themselves capable of guiding others. This he grants them in a variety of expressions, verse 18, 19, 20. By which the apostle secretly taxes their vanity, and insinuates, that whatever they had in point of privilege, they abused it. 2. The apostle charges them with a practical contradiction to this their knowledge, and this he makes good against them, particularly against their highest pretenders, their teachers, *first*, By condescending on several instances, wherein they were guilty, and appealing to their consciences for the truth of them, verses 22, 23. which I shall not insist in explaining, *second*, He proves it further by a testimony of scripture, verse 24. wherein God complains, that their provocations were such, as tempted the Gentiles to blaspheme his name. This is the argument. The conclusion he leaves to themselves to draw. And indeed it will bear all the conclusions formerly laid down against the Gentiles. Whatever their knowledge was, they were not doers, but breakers of the law, and so could not be satisfied by it, verse 13. but might expect to perish for their transgression of it, according to verse 12. They sinned against knowledge, and so deserved as severe resentments as the Gentiles, chap. i. verse 32. They could not pretend ignorance; for they taught others the contrary, and so were without excuse, Chap. ii. verse 1.

The apostle next proceeds to answer their objections. The first whereof is brought in, verse 25. The short of it is this; the Jews pretended they had circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, and so claimed the privileges of it. This objection is not directly proposed, but the answer anticipating it is introduced as a confirmation or reason enforcing the conclusion aimed at, *viz.* That they could not be justified by the law: and therefore it is, that we find the causal par-

ticle *for* in the beginning of the verse. This much for the manner wherein the objection is introduced. To this objection the apostle answers,

1. By a concession, "circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law," that is, if thou perfectly obey the commands, then thou mayest in justice demand the privileges of the covenant, and plead the seal of it, as a pledge of the faithfulness of God in the promises.

2. He answers directly by showing, that this seal signified just nothing as to their claim of a legal righteousness, because they were "breakers of the law. But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." The short of the matter is this; this seal is only a conditional engagement of the faithfulness of God: it does not say, thou shall get the privileges whether thou perform the condition or not: so that by this means, if the condition is not performed, ye have nothing to ask, and ye are as remote from a claim to the reward, as they who want the seal.

3. The apostle, to illustrate and confirm what he had said about the unprofitableness of circumcision in case of transgressions, shows that a Gentile, upon supposition that it were possible, obeying the law, but wanting the seal of the covenant, would have a better title to the privileges promised, than a Jew, who had the seal, but wanted the obedience, verse 26. "Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law," that is, if a Gentile should yield that obedience the law requires, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? That is, shall not he, notwithstanding he wanteth the outward sign of circumcision, be allowed to plead an interest in the blessings promised to obedience, and to insist upon the faithfulness of God for the performance of the promises made to the obedient, of which circumcision is the sign? The reason of this is plain, circumcision seals the performance of promise to the obedient, the Gentile obeying has that which is the ground whereon the faithfulness of God is engaged to perform the promise, *viz.* obedience, and so a real title to the thing promised, though he want the outward sign: whereas the disobeying Jew has only the seal, which secures nothing, but upon the condition of that obedience, which he has not yielded. This is only spoken by way of supposition, not as if any of the Gentiles had yielded such obedience: for he has plainly proven the contrary before. Plainly the apostle's reason is this, circumcision is an engagement for the performance of the promise to the obedient. The disobedient Jew has therefore no title to the promise; whereas the Gentile that obeys, having that obedience, to which the promise is made, has a real right to it, and so might expect the performance of it, as if he had the outward seal.

4. To clear yet further the unprofitableness of circumcision without obedience, the apostle, upon the foresaid supposition, shows, that the Gentile obeying would not only have the better title: but his obedience would signally contribute to the clearing of the justice of God, in condemning the disobedient Jew, verse 27. "And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision doest transgress the law," that is, if a Gentile wanting circumcision and the security thereby given, with the other advantages which the Jews have, discover the inexcusableness of your disobedience, who have the letter, and circumcision or the written law, that is, who have a clearer rule of duty and a plainer promise.

5. To remove quite the foundation of this objection, the apostle clears the real design of circumcision, and the character of the person to whom the advantages do belong, verse 28, 29. wherein he shows negatively, that the Jew to whom the promises do belong, is not every one who belongs to that nation, or is outwardly a Jew. And that the circumcision, to which the promises are absolutely made, is not the outward circumcision which is in the flesh, verse 28. but positively, that the Jew, to whom the promised blessings belong, is he who is a Jew inwardly, that is, who has that inward frame of heart which God requires of his people; and the circumcision, to which blessings are absolutely promised, is that inward renovation of heart, which is the principle of the obedience required by, and accepted of God, verse 29.

This objection being removed out of the way, the apostle proceeds to answer an instance against what he has now said in the three or four first verses of the 3d chap. the objection is proposed verse 1. and is in short this, by your reasoning, would the Jews say, we have no advantage beyond the Gentiles, and circumcision is utterly unprofitable. To this he answers, 1. By denying flatly what is asserted in the objection, declaring that notwithstanding of all this, the Jews had every way the advantage. 2. Lest this should appear a vain assertion, he clears it by an instance of the highest consequence, *viz.* that they had “the oracles of God,” which the Gentiles wanted. wherein that relief against transgressions, which the Gentiles were strangers to, is revealed, as he expressly teaches afterwards, verse 21. As if the apostle had said, though ye Jews fail of obedience, and so are cut off from justification by the law as a covenant of works: yet ye have a righteousness revealed to you in the law and the prophets, verse 21. to which the sinner may betake himself for relief; this the Gentiles, who want the law and the prophets, know nothing of. 3. He clears, that this is a great advantage, notwithstanding that many of the Jews were not the better for it, verse 3. thus at once anticipating an objection that might be moved, and confirming what he had said. “What if some did not believe,” that is, though some have fallen short of the advantages of this revelation, shall we therefore say it was not in itself a privilege? Nay, it is in itself a privilege, and they, by their own fault in not believing, have forfeited the advantage of it to themselves only; “for shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” That is, assuredly believers will not be the worse dealt with for the unbelief of others; but they will obtain the advantage of the promises.

We have insisted much longer upon this context than was designed, but we hope that they who consider that the apostle’s arguments and his whole purposes, are directly levelled at that which is the main scope of these papers, will not reckon this a faulty digression. And besides we shall immediately see the usefulness of this, in order to remove the foundation of a great many objections drawn from this context by Mr Humfrey; some of whose notions we shall consider after we have removed one objection more, and it is this.

VII. The words of the apostle Paul to the Athenians, Acts xviii. 27. are made use of to this purpose. The apostle tells them in the preceding words, that the God whom he preached, was he “who made the worlds, hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all

the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation ; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us ; for in him we live, and move, and have our being." The sum of what is pleaded from this testimony amounts to this, that men left to the light of nature are in duty bound to seek the Lord ; that God is not far from them, but he may be found ; and that if they will feel after him, that is, trace these dark discoveries of him, in the works of creation and providence, they may haply find him.

For answer to this we say : 1. No word is here to be stretched further, than the occasion and scope of the apostle requires and allows. 2. The occasion of this discourse was, that Paul being at Athens, saw that city set upon the worship of idols, and overlooking the one true God, which moved him with wrath, and gave occasion to this discourse : the evident scope whereof is to show, that they were to blame, that they overlooked the true God, and gave that worship to idols, which was only to be given to God. For convincing them of this, 3. He clears, that the true God, by his works of creation and providence, had in so far discovered himself, that if by these works they sought after the knowledge of him, they might find him so far, or know so much, as to understand that he alone was the true God, to whom divine worship was due. 4. He owns, that indeed these discoveries were but dark, to wit, in comparison of the discoveries he had made of himself in the word ; which is sufficiently intimated by that expression of feeling after him, they might find him, so far as to deliver them from that gross idolatry and neglect of him they were involved in. Here is all that the scope holds out : but he does not say, that they might find him, so as to obtain the saving knowledge of him by those works of Providence : but on the contrary he tells, that " God winked at the times of ignorance," that is, seemed as if he did not notice men, and in his holy and sovereign justice left them to find by their own experience, which by any means they had, that they could not arrive to the saving knowledge of God : though they might, as has been just now said, have gone so far as disentangle themselves from that gross idolatry for which he now reproved them. He does not say, that God then called them to saving repentance, gave them any discovery of his purpose of mercy, and thereon invited them to peace and acceptance ; but on the contrary, he tells, that now he calls all men every where to repent, verse 30. which sufficiently intimates that they had not that call before. In a word, it is not that seeking or finding of God, or that nearness to God which is here intended, that elsewhere the scripture speaks of, when it treats about men's case who are living under the gospel, and have God in Christ revealed, and the gospel call to turn to, seek after, and find him to their own salvation ; as the scope of the place fully clears. Any one that would see this place fully considered may find it done by the learned Dr Owen, in that accurate, though short digression concerning universal grace, inserted in his *Theolog. Pantodap.* page 33. There likewise is that other scripture, Acts xiv. 15, 16, 17. largely considered. On which I shall not now insist, seeing there is nothing in it that has the least appearance of opposition to what we have asserted, if not that God is there said, " not to have left himself without witness" among the nations, in as much as he " did good to them, gave them

fruitful seasons, &c." This is all granted; but these necessaries of life are no witness that God designed for them mercy and forgiveness, as has been made appear above, and as the Spirit of God tells us there; for God suffered them to walk in their own ways.

VIII. Some allege, that there is a law of grace connatural to man in his lapsed state, and that in substance it is this, that God will pardon sinners upon their repentance: and they tell us, that this law of grace is as much written in the heart of lapsed man, as the law of nature was written in the heart of innocent man. To this purpose speaks Mr Humfrey in his *Peaceable Disquisitions*,* and that with such an air of confidence, as might make one expect better proof than he has offered.

We shall just now examine Mr Humfrey's arguments. As to the notion itself of a connatural law of grace written in the hearts of all mankind in this lapsed condition, we look upon it as absolutely false. It contradicts scripture, reason, and experience. My design excuseth me from the use of scripture arguments. Experience I need not insist upon, after what has been already said. Reason will not allow us to call any law connatural to man, save upon one of these three accounts: either, because we are born with actual knowledge of it; or, because it lies so open and is so suited to our rational faculties, that any man, who has the use of reason, can scarce miss thinking of it, or, at least, refuse his assent to it, when it is proposed to him; or finally, because it is nearly connected with notions and principles that are self-evident, and is easily deducible from them. Now this discovery of mercy to sinners merely upon repentance is connatural in none of these senses. I know no truth that is connatural in the first sense. The ingenious Mr Locke has said enough against this.† In the second sense, it is not connatural. Who will tell me, that this is a self-evident proposition, while so great a part of the more knowing and judicious part of mankind, not only refuse their assent to it, but reject it as a plain untruth? Yea, I doubt if any man that understands the case, and knows nothing of the satisfaction of Christ, will give his assent to it. In the last sense it is not connatural; for if it were so, it were easily demonstrable by these self-evident principles, to which it is nearly allied: which when Mr Humfrey shall have demonstrated from these principles or any other for him, we shall then consider it; but this I am apprehensive will never be done. In a word, all these truths, which with any tolerable propriety of speech can be called connatural, if they are not self-evident, are yet such, as admit of an easy demonstration. And it is foolish to call any truth connatural, unless it is such, as either needs no proof, or it is easily demonstrable. This is sufficient to overthrow this notion.

Before we consider the arguments which Mr Humfrey advances for his opinions, I shall offer to the reader a more full view of it in his own words. He then asserts, "that there is a connatural law of grace written in the heart of man, that is, that this law of lapsed nature, this law of grace, or remedying law, is written in the heart of man in regard of his fallen nature, no less than the law of pure nature itself was. The law of nature, says he, as I take it, is the dictates of right reason, de-

* *Peaceable Disquisitions*; chap. 4. p. 36.

† *Essay of Human Understanding*. Lib. 1. p. 56, 57.

claring to us our duty to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbours, and the light of the same reason will dictate to us, when we have failed in that duty, to repent and turn to God with trusting to his mercy and pardon if we do so, and not else. We do find it legible in our hearts, that God is good and wisely gracious to consider our lost estate, and pity our infirmities and necessary frailty.* After he had told us of a threefold promulgation of this law of grace, under the Patriarchs, by Moses and Christ, which he calls three editions of the same law: he subjoins, "Now I say that though the heathen be not under (or have not) this law of grace, in the third and last setting out, or in the state under the gospel; yet they are under it (or have it) in the state of the ancients, or as they had it in the first promulgation; and upon supposition that any of them do, according to the light they have, live up in sincerity to this law, I dare not be the man, that shall deny, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (procuring this law or covenant for them, as for us and all the world) they shall be saved even as we." And a little before he says, "These characters thus engraven in the heart of man, is the same law of grace in its practical contents, which is more largely paraphrased upon in the scriptures."

Surely the apostle Paul had a very different notion of the state of the heathen world from this gentleman, when he tells us emphatically, "that they are strangers from the covenants of promise," that "they are without God," that is, without the saving knowledge of God; for another sense the word will scarce bear; that "they are without Christ, without hope, afar off," &c. But it is not my design to offer scripture arguments against this anti-scriptural divinity. I leave this to others, and proceed to his proof; nor shall I in the consideration of them take notice of every thing that might be justly quarrelled; but only hint at the main faults.

I. He reasons to this effect, If there is no "counatural law of grace," written in the heart of man, then none of those who lived before Moses could be saved, inasmuch as there was then no other law by which they could be saved. This argument he borrows from Suarez, and concludes it triumphantly thus, "which is a truth so evident as makes the proof of that law, by that reason alone to be good."†

But for all this commendation, I think this argument has a double fault. 1. It proves not the point, *viz.* that there is a law of grace written in the hearts of all men by nature; but only that there was such a law written in their hearts who were saved. 2. This argument is built upon a supposition that is plainly false, *viz.* that there was no other way that they could be saved but by the law of grace written in their hearts. This, I say, is false; for they were saved by the gospel discovery of Christ in the promise revealed to them by God; and wherein the generality of the Lord's people were more fully instructed by the patriarchs, who were preachers of righteousness. And this revelation and preaching was to them instead of the written word. Thus we see this mighty argument proves just nothing.

II. He reasons from Abraham's pleading with God on behalf of the righteous men in Sodom. Here he thinks it evident, that there were

* Peaceable Disquisitions, chap. 4. p. 56, 57.

† Ibid. p. 56.

righteous men. He proves, there were none righteous then according to the tenor of the covenant of works, and therefore concludes, that these righteous persons did belong to, and were dealt with according to the covenant of grace. But now what does all this prove? Does it prove that these men were under the covenant of grace, and that they were dealt with according to the tenor of it? Well, I grant it. But what will he infer from this, that therefore all the world were under the covenant of grace, or shall be dealt with according to its tenor? I would have thought that one who has read Suarez, might know that this conclusion will not follow. If there had been any righteous men in Sodom, it is true they were under the covenant of grace: and I add, if there be any such in the world, they are under it; therefore all the world are so? Who sees not that this will not follow? Again, supposing, that there were righteous men in Sodom, how will Mr Humfrey prove that they had no other rule of their life, or ground of their hope, but his "connatural law of grace?" Why might they not have revelation? Was not Abraham, to whom God revealed himself, and made so many gracious promises, well known to some in Sodom? Might not the fame of such a person so near, easily reach them? Was not he the deliverer of Sodom some eighteen years before, and did not Lot his friend, who was well acquainted with the revelations made to Abraham, live in Sodom?

III. Mr Humfrey tells us,* that the law of grace was in Adam's and Noah's time published to all the world, and that it never was repealed, and therefore all the world are still under it, and so in a capacity of salvation. But 1. this, were it granted, will not prove Mr Humfrey's "connatural law of grace." The gospel is revealed to all the inhabitants of England; therefore the law of grace is written in all their hearts. He must know very little of many people in England who will admit the consequence. 2. nor will it prove, that all the world are under the gospel revelation, even in its first edition, to use Mr Humfrey's words. Suppose God once revealed to the world, when it was comprised in the family of Noah, the covenant of grace, and so all this little world had had the external revelation. Will Mr Humfrey hence infer, that all the descendants of Noah, after so long a tract of time, in so many different nations, have still the same revelation? If he do, the consequence is nought. It is as sure as any thing can be, that very quickly most of the descendants of Noah lost in so far that revelation, or at least corrupted it with their vain additions to that degree, that it could be of advantage to no man. 3. Nor will what Mr Humfrey talks of his repeal, help out his argument. To deprive a people of the advantage of an external revelation, there is no need of a formal repeal by a published statute; it is enough that men by their wickedness lose all remembrance of it, and suffer it to fall into desuetude, and God sees not meet to renew the revelation to them or their posterity.

IV. Mr Humfrey will prove his point by a syllogism, and it runs thus, "the doers of the law are justified," Rom. ii. ver. 13. But "the Gentiles are doers of the law;" Ergo, some of the Gentiles are justified before God.

* Peaceable Disquisitions, p. 62.

The conclusion of this argument is the direct antithesis of that position, which the apostle makes it his business in that whole context to prove, as is evident from the account already given of that context. This is pretty bold. But let us see how he proves his minor. This he pretends to do from Rom. ii. 14. Where it is said that "the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law," and so are "doers of the law," and consequently shall be justified. Well, is this the way that this gentleman interprets scripture upon other occasions? I hope not. He has no regard to the scope or design of the apostle's discourse. All that the apostle says here, is, that the Gentiles are in so far "doers of the law," that their doing is proof that they have some knowledge of it. The persons who here are said to be doers of the law, are the very same persons of whom the apostle says, verse 12. That they "shall perish without the law." But we have fully cleared this context before, and thither I refer the reader.

But Mr Humfrey reforms his argument, and makes it run thus, he who sincerely keeps the law, shall be justified according to that of our Lord, "keep the commandments, if thou wilt enter into eternal life;" and that of the apostle, "God will render eternal life to every one that patiently continues in well-doing:" But subsumes he, some Gentiles "keep the law sincerely:" And therefore it is according to the gospel, which requires not the rigour, but accepts of sincere obedience. As to our author's major, if the meaning of it be, that we shall be justified before God for, or upon our sincere obedience, according to the gospel, I crave leave to differ from him: nor will the scriptures adduced by him prove it in this sense. The first is a reference of a young man to the covenant of works, who was not seeking salvation, but eternal life by doing, in order to discover to him his own inability and his need of Christ. But as to this, commentators may be consulted. The other text I have cleared above. His minor I flatly deny: Well, but our author will prove it by a new syllogism, which runs thus, he who yields such obedience as the Jews, who are circumcised in heart do, yields that sincere obedience, upon which the gospel accepts and justifies men: but the Gentiles, or some of them yield such obedience.

I have already entered my dissent against the last clause of the major, viz. "that the gospel justifies men on sincere obedience; but it is my design to debate the point of justification with our author at this time, and so I let this proposition pass; Yet I again deny the minor, which our author essays to prove thus, that some of the Gentiles do obey in that sense, in which the Jews, who are circumcised inwardly or in heart, do obey, This he pretends to demonstrate from the apostle's words, Rom. ii. 26, 27. "Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, &c. and shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law," &c. But where will our author find the proof of his minor in these words? There is nothing like it, unless he take the antecedent of a hypothetic proposition, for a plain assertion. But this antecedent needs not be allowed possible, and yet the apostle's words and his assertion would hold good, and all that he aims at be reached. Every one knows, that in such propositions, it is only the connexion that is asserted. As for the meaning of the text, I have showed before that it is not for our author's purpose.

V. But our author has another argument which he thinks is clearer

than all the rest, and professes himself perfectly struck with the evidence of it, as with a beam of light never to be withstood, or any more to be doubted. Well, this mighty argument runs thus, "If this was the chief advantage the Jew had over the Gentile, that one had the oracles of God, and the other had not, then was there not this difference between them, that one is only in a state of nature, and the other in a state of grace; or that one was in a capacity, and the other under an impossibility of salvation. For this were an advantage of a far greater nature. But this was the chief advantage, Rom. iii. 2. 'Chiefly because were committed to them the oracles of God;'"* Ergo.

I must confess, that I am not struck with so much evidence upon the proposal of this argument, as it seems our author was. To me this argument appears a plain sophism. That the Jews had the oracles of God, was a greater advantage than our author seems to think it. And while the apostle calls it the chief advantage of the Jews above the Gentiles, that they had the oracles of God, how will our author infer from this, that they were upon an equal foot as to the means absolutely necessary for salvation; or, which is the same, as to a capacity of salvation? For certainly he that wants the means absolutely necessary to salvation is not capable of salvation, in that sense that belongs to our purpose. For my part I would draw the quite contrary conclusion from it. Thus, the Jews had this privilege above the Gentiles, that they had the oracles of God intrusted with them, wherein the only way of salvation is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, Rom. iii. 21. and therefore had access to salvation: whereas, on the other hand, the Gentiles, wanting divine revelation, which alone can discover that righteousness, whereby a sinner can be justified, did want the means absolutely necessary to salvation, and so were not in capacity of salvation. Now where is our author's boasted of demonstration? The occasion of his mistake is this, he once inadvertently supposed, that these two advantages, divine revelation and access to salvation were quite different, and that the one was not included in the other. But of this enough. Mr Humfrey, I know, may say, they had the law of grace in their hearts. But that is the question. Our author asserts this; but he does so without book. We have all this while been seeking proof of this; hitherto we have met with none. We have met with some scriptures interpreted or wrested into a sense plainly inconsistent with the scope and intendment, without any regard had to the context and drift of the discourse, which is no safe way of managing scriptures.

Next, he insists upon the story of the repentance of the Ninevites. They were without the church; it was a law of grace which led them to repent. But had not the Ninevites divine revelation? Did they not repent at the preaching of Jonah? How will our author prove that Jonah never dropped a word, and that there was a possibility of stopping the progress of the controversy by their turning from their evil courses? Did not Jonah apprehend, that the event would be a further forbearance? But perhaps some may say, Jonah had no mind they should be spared, and therefore would not drop any encouragement. But we know it was not of choice that he went there, and as

* Peaceable Disquisitions, p. 63, 64.

he went there in obedience to God, so no doubt, he who had been so sharply disciplined for disobedience, would speak what the Lord commanded him. Again, had they assurance of pardon or eternal salvation upon their repentance? Was it gospel repentance? Or did it reach further than a forbearance of temporal judgments? Well, but the instance of Cornelius seems more pat to his purpose. He was a Gentile, was accepted with God; and Peter tells, that in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted. But who will assure me that Cornelius was a stranger to the scriptures? Did he not know them? Did he not believe them? How could that be? It is plain he was a proselyte, and embraced the Jews' religion as to its substance, and that he did believe, since he pleased God and was accepted. Now we know that without faith it is impossible to please God. What wanted he then? Why, he wanted to be informed that the Messiah promised was come, and that Christ Jesus was he. As to what the apostle says of God's acceptance of persons of all nations, any one that will give himself the trouble of considering his scope, and the circumstances of the place, will see, that is nothing else but a comment upon the design of the vision he got to instruct him, that now God was to admit persons of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, to a participation of the covenant blessings.

DIGRESSION.

A short Digression concerning God's government of the heathen world, occasioned by the foregoing objections, wherein an attempt is made to account for the occurrences that have the favourable aspect to them, without supposing any interment or design of their salvation, which is adjected as an appendix to the answers given to Mr Humfrey's objections, wherein it is made evident, that there is no need to suppose the heathens under a law or government of grace.

IF I should here stop, the persons with whom I have to do might possibly allege, that the main strength of their cause remains untouched, and the most straitening difficulty that presses ours is not noticed. The short of the matter is, they inquire, what government are the heathen world under? They conceive it must be allowed, a government of grace, since they are not dealt by according to the demerit of their sins. Possibly we might propose some questions that would be no less hard to satisfy by those who talk of a universal law of grace: but this would not remove the difficulty, though it might embarrass the opposers of our sentiments. I shall therefore open my mind in this matter, and offer what occurs on this head. If I mistake, it will plead somewhat for me, that the subject, so far as I know, is not usually spoken of by others, and I have not of choice meddled with it, but was led to it by my subject, that requires some consideration of it. If we state right thoughts in this matter, it will give light to many things, that otherwise are dark. What I have to say, I shall propose in the

eons, equal, and just. This law exacted of all subjected to it exact, punctual, and perfect obedience ; and for its preservation it was armed with a penal sanction, answerable to the high and tender regard which the infinitely holy, wise, and great God hath for the honour of that law, that was the declaration of his will, bare the impress of his authority and representation of all his moral excellencies. And besides all this he also proposed a reward, suitable to his wisdom and goodness, for which his faithfulness became pledge. It is not needful to launch out in proof of the several branches of this assertion. That man was made under a law, is questioned by none, but atheists ; and they have their mouths sufficiently stopped of old and late by many persons of worth and learning. That this law is holy, just, and good, cannot, without notable injury to the Deity, be denied. That it exacted perfect obedience, is so evident, that no person, who thinks what he says, can deny it. A law not requiring perfect obedience to its own precepts, is a law not requiring what it requires, which is plain nonsense. A posterior law may not require perfect obedience to a prior : but every law requires perfect obedience to itself. That this law was armed with a penal sanction is evident from the wisdom of the lawgiver, who could not enact such laws, which he knew men would transgress, without providing for the honour of his own authority. Besides, if there is no penal sanction, it is not to be expected that laws could ever reach their end, especially as things have always stood with man. But were all those proofs given up, the effects of vindictive justice in the world, with the fears that sinners are under, lest all these are only the beginning of sorrows, sufficiently confirm this truth, and moreover assure us, that it is such a penalty as suits every way the offence in its nature and aggravations. But I know none of those things will be questioned by those, whom we have mainly under view at present.

II. All the children of men, in all ages and in all places of the world, have been and are guilty of violations of this law. We have heard the deists owning this before ; and Christians will not deny it. Deists would have thought it their interest to deny it : but since, it is unquestionable that the generality offend, in instances past reckoning. If they had affirmed, that one did in no instance offend, they might have been required to make good their assertion : but this they could not do. They durst not condescend. And therefore it must be owned that the best, not in one instance, but in many, violate this law.

III. Upon account of these violations of his holy and righteous law, all mankind, every individual, and every generation of men, that have lived in the world, are obnoxious to justice. By those sins they have forfeited any claim they might have laid to the reward of perfect obedience, and are liable to the penalty in the sanction of the law. And God might, at any time, have righteously inflicted it, either upon an individual or any whole race of men. I determine not now what the punishment was. They who call our offences small, and extenuate them, seem scarcely impressed with suitable notions of God. And I doubt will not be sustained judges competent of the qualities of offences and injuries done to his honour. But whatever the punishment is, eternal or not, which I dispute not now, because we agree about it with those, whom we now have under consideration, it is certain none can prove, that it is all confined to time, or that any temporal punishment

is sufficient for the least offence that is committed against God. And it is also clear, that, upon one's sinning, the penalty might be presently inflicted, without any injustice, provided the penal sanction were suitable and just in its constitution, as of necessity it must be, where God made the law and constituted the punishment.

IV. Although God righteously might have cut off any generation of men, and swept the earth clean; yet has he seen meet to spare sinners, even multitudes of them, for a long time. A piece of conduct truly astonishing! Especially it would appear so, if we understood how much God hates sin. The only reason why the heathen world hath not admired it more, and been more extensive in their inquiries into the reasons of it, is, because they had but very short and imperfect notions of God's holiness, and the evil of sin. They took notice of God's forbearance of some notorious offenders. Some of them were stumbled at it, and some of them endeavoured to account for it. But the wonder of God's sparing a world full of sinners, was little noticed, and though they had observed it, they would have quickly found themselves as much at a loss here, as any where else. The scriptures have not gratified the curiosity of men with such a full account, as our vain minds would have desired, that are too forward to question him particularly about his ways, who gives an account of none of his matters: yet some reasons of this conduct are dropped that may satisfy the humble. 1. God made a covenant with Adam, wherein his posterity, as well as himself, were concerned and included. They were to be gainers or losers as he acquitted himself well or ill. This transaction, I know, is denied by some Christians. I shall not dispute the matter with them: others have done it. I now take it for granted. And if they will not suppose it, it is but the loss of this reason. And let them if they can, put a better in its room. Upon supposition, that there was such a transaction, and that it was just, as we must allow all to be, whereof God is the author. It was not only equal, but in point of wisdom, apparently necessary, or, at least, highly suitable, that all concerned in this transaction should be brought into being, to reap the fruits of it. But this was impossible if the world had not been spared. 2. God in sparing the world, had a design of mercy upon some. And many of them were to proceed from some of the worst sinners. He designed to save some in all ages, and in most places. Their progenitors must, therefore, of necessity, be kept alive. He bears with the provoking carriage of evil men; because out of their loins he intends to extract others, whom he will form for the "glory of his grace." 3. God is patient towards sinners, to manifest the equity of his future justice upon them. When men are spared and continue in sin, the pleas of infirmity and mistake are cut off, and they are convicted of malice. They are silenced, and onlookers satisfied that severity is justly exercised on them. "The longer that God delays punishment, the more just does its infliction become." As patience, while it is exercised, is the silence of his justice; so when it is abused, it silences men's complaints against his justice. Other reasons of this conduct we might glean from the scriptures: but my design allows me not to insist. Nor indeed do they descend so low as to satisfy curious wits. "Lo, these are parts of his ways and aims, but how little a portion is heard," that is, even by revelation, known "of him," says Job, chap. xxvi. 14.

V. The world or sinners in it are spared, not by a proper reprieve, that is, a delay of punishment, after the offenders are taken up, questioned, tried, convicted, and solemnly condemned; the way, manner, and time of their punishment fixed, by a judicial application of the general threatening of the law in this particular case, by the judge competent, and the sentence plainly intimated; a delay of the execution after this, if it is of the judge's proper motion, if the offender is not imprisoned, if he is employed, and if favours are conferred upon him, and obedience required of him, gives hopes of impunity and escape; and if the persons commit not new offences, without, at least, an appearance of insincerity, they are scarce wont to be condemned upon the first sentence. But sinners are spared by a forbearance, or wise and just connivance, if the word would not offend. The governor of the world knows and sees the carriage of sinners, is aware of their sins, and keeps silence for a time; but yet keeps an eye upon them, calls them not into question, puts off the trial, takes them not up, as it were, and winks at them. Now all this may be justly done for a time; the sinners may be employed, and acts of bounty, for holy and wise ends, may be conferred on them, and exercised towards them, and that without the least injustice, without any design of pardoning; as the sequel of this discourse will more fully clear.

VI. This forbearance of God is wise, just, and holy: For, 1. He is the only competent judge, as to the time of punishing offenders. It cannot be made appear, that he may not thus delay, even where he has no thought of pardoning. 2. It implies no approbation of the faults formerly committed, or those they may commit, during this interval of time, since he has sufficiently testified against them, by the laws he has made, which forbid them, by the penalty he has annexed to those laws, and by examples of his severity upon others, which have not been wanting in any generation. These may sufficiently acquit him; however, for a time, he keeps silent and conceals, as it were, his knowledge of the offences of some, or his resentments against them, on account of them. 3. He accomplishes purposes worthy of him; which are sufficient to justify him in this conduct, while he keeps silence, and carries to them, as if there were no offence, or he knew none, and they go on in their rebellion or secret practices against his law and government. Impudent offenders have no place left, either for denial or excuse of their crimes, or complaints against the severity of his resentments. Spectators are made to see, that it is not infirmity or mistake, but fixed alienation or enmity that is so sharply punished. He serves himself of them, and makes them, though they mean not so, carry on the designs of his glory, either in helping or trying, or bringing into being, persons whom he has design of mercy upon. And sure he may justly do this, since not only he has the best title to their obedience; but he has all the reason and right in the world to use that life, while he spares it, for what purposes he pleases, which they have forfeited to justice. Who can blame him, if sometimes he spares secret plotters, and lets them go on till their plots are sufficiently ripened for their conviction, and satisfaction of others. Nor is there any ground to quarrel, if he deal even with the worst, as equal judges do with the mother guilty of some manifest crime; they not only spare and delay the execution, till the child whom they design mercy to, is brought forth; but do not take notice of her, or in-

minate even a purpose of punishment, till the child is brought forth, lest the child should suffer by the mother's despair and grief. 4. This is yet more remarkably just in God, who can on the one hand secure the criminal, so that justice shall not suffer by the delay, and on the other, that the criminal shall not run out into those impieties, that would cross the ends, endanger the safety or wrong the reputation of his government, with those who are capable of making an equal estimate of things.

VII. It was every way suitable and necessary that the persons thus spared, should be continued under a moral government. They were not to be ruled by mere force; 1. Because they are, while under such a forbearance, capable of some sort of a moral government. When a prince deals with persons, whom he knows to be on treasonable plots against his government, and conceals his resentments, he still manages them as subjects, and continues them under a government; nor is he faulty in doing so. 2. They are not, while under such a forbearance, capable of any other government; for if once the ruler of the world begin to deal in a way of force and justice with them, then this forbearance is at an end. 3. It were a manifest reproach to the governor of the world, if they were supposed under no government at all. Besides, on this supposition the ends of his forbearance could not be reached. And moreover, the moral dependence of creatures on their Creator, which can only be maintained either in this way, or by putting them under the penal sanction of the law, would be dissolved, which cannot be admitted.

VIII. Sinners under this dispensation are still under the law of creation. It is true this law can no longer be the means of conveying a title to the great and principal reward; but that is their own fault, and not the governor's nor the law's. But notwithstanding of this, they are still under it, and it continues the instrument of God's government over them. For, 1. The ground of obedience still continues, although some of the motives, yea, the principal encouragement, I mean, eternal rewards, are forfeited. The obligation to obedience can never otherwise be dissolved, than by the inflicting of a capital punishment, which puts out of all possibility of yielding any obedience. Some, I know, make the power and right of obliging, to consist merely in a power of rewarding and punishing: but this is easily evicted of falsehood: and although the learned Mr Gastrel has advanced this in his sermons at Boyle's lecture, yet we have no reason to receive it, as Beconsal, in his treatise of the law of nature, and others, have sufficiently cleared. 2. This law is sufficient to answer the designs of this forbearance, and God's rule over them, who live under it and by it. It has not lost its directive power; but it is able sufficiently to instruct, at least, in these duties, either as to God ourselves, or others, that are of absolute necessity to keep up some order and decorum in the world, carry on regularly the propagation of mankind and the like. It is manifestly sufficient to be a test to try men's willingness to obey, and convince men of wilfulness in their rebellion; and to be a standing monument of God's holiness; yea, it continues to have that force upon the consciences of the generality, as to be a check to keep them from running into enormities subversive of all order and society, and destructive to the other ends of God's patience. 3. Experience fully clears, that men still pay regard to this law, and this is the only law that men destitute of a revelation own.

IX. While God saw meet to continue this forbearance, it was not necessary nor suitable, that he should plainly, particularly, and solemnly intimate all the length he designed to carry his resentments against offenders. 1. There was no necessity of this towards the clearing of God's holiness; this being sufficiently done by the promulgation of the law, its penalty and many particular examples. 2. This would have undone the dispensation whereof we have been speaking. 3. This is utterly inconsistent with all the designs of it. Men had been driven into despair, and so all moral government had been dissolved.

X. Yea, it was consistent with his holiness, and suitable to his wisdom, to permit men to fall into sin, very great sins, and for a time to go on in them. God can neither do any thing that is unworthy, nor omit any thing that is worthy of him, of a moral kind. And it is certain in fact, that such sins and enormities he has permitted, and therefore, however strange it appears to us, that a holy God, who could have restrained, should permit those things; yet since he, who can do no evil, has done it, we must conclude this altogether consistent with his holiness. And it is manifestly so with his wisdom, since no injury is done to his holiness. For, 1. By this means sinners give full proof, what a height their enmity against God is come to. 2. They are the meeter to exercise his own people. And, 3. They are the ripe for the strokes he designs to inflict on them.

XI. Notwithstanding of all this, it was meet and necessary that some offenders should be remarkably punished, and some bounds set to offences; and more especially, those offences which cross the designs of God's forbearance, and tend to dissolve the government and order, which it was necessary God should maintain in the world. And hence it has come to pass, that not the greatest sins, such as these certainly are, which immediately strike against God; but those which strike against order and government, have been most remarkably punished in all ages, as might be made appear by innumerable instances of the remarkable punishments of murders, treasons, and undutifulness to parents. This is congruous to justice, not only on the mentioned account; but on this, that the notices concerning these last sort of evils, are much more clear in most instances, than those which respect the former.

XII. It is every way suitable to the wisdom, sincerity, and holiness of God; yea, and of absolute necessity to the design of this forbearance, that he exercise bounty in lesser things; such as the good things of this life are; and that he vouchsafe those mental enduements to some of the spared sinners, which are necessary towards the maintenance of that government, which God was to keep up among them; such are civil wisdom, invention, courage, &c. These he may give without the least intimation of any design of special mercy. For what relation have these things to special mercy, which are heaped in abundance on the worst of men. However, that it was fit these things should be bestowed upon some in this case, is evident, because, 1. Eternal rewards are now forfeited, and there would have been nothing to induce to obedience if this had not been. 2. Hereby he gives a witness to his own goodness, which aggravates offences committed against him. 3. Hereby he draws on men to obedience, or rather to do those pieces of service, which are in their own nature, such as he allows and requires, although they design not his service, but their own pleasure and

profit. 4. Hereby he quits scores with sinners, while he suffers not what is even but pretended service, to pass without a reward, which is sufficient to show what a kind rewarder he would have been, if they had indeed obeyed. 5. Hereby he cuts off all excuse for their continuance in disobedience. 6. This conduct gives them an innocent occasion of discovering latent wickedness, which otherwise they would have had no access to show, and keeps from that utter despair, which would have marred the design of God's forbearance.

XIII. These vouchsafements of divine bounty lead to a sort of repentance, not that to which the promise of pardon is joined in the gospel. For, 1. They give eminent discoveries of the goodness of that God whom we have offended, and consequently of the folly of offending him, which naturally leads to sorrow or regret. 2. They strengthen, as all benefits do, the original obligation to obedience. 3. They let us see, that obedience is not altogether fruitless, since they may expect less severe resentments if they return; yea, may expect some share in this bounty, and are not under an impossibility of mercy, for any thing they can know.

XIV. After all, I do yet see no reason to think, that they, who are merely under such a dispensation as this, which I take to be the case of the heathen world, are under a law of grace, which assures, that upon a return to former obedience, sins shall be entirely pardoned, and they have access to eternal rewards. I grant it highly probable, that if God had not intended grace to some, such a dispensation had never been. I admit that this dispensation is subservient to a design of grace upon some. I further allow, that there is no absolute impossibility of the salvation of persons, however deeply guilty, who are not yet under the penalty: but if they are saved, it must be by some means or way revealed by God, and superadded to all the former, which I can never see to amount to any law of grace, since it is manifest, 1. That all this may be exercised towards them whom God in the end designs everlastingly to punish. He exercises much long-suffering to the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. 2. There is nothing in this whole dispensation, that in the least intimates any purpose of God to pass by former offences, either absolutely or upon condition. 3. In fact it has never been found, that ever this dispensation has led any one to that sincere repentance, which must be allowed necessary in order to pardon. And I dare not say, that God ever did appoint means for such an end, which after so long a trial should never answer it. 4. All whom God has pardoned, or of whom we may say, that he has brought them to repentance, have been brought by other means. So that, upon the whole, I see no ground for asserting a universal law of grace.

As what has been above said, takes off the principal pretence for such a universal law of grace, which some seem so fond of; so if any such is asserted, it must be owned to be a law of a very universal tenor, as being that wherein all mankind are concerned. It must be allowed a law designed to take off the force of the original law, concreated with our nature, that necessarily results from the nature of God and man, and their natural religion, at least, as to one instance, I mean the penal sanction, in case of sin. It must be allowed a law not merely directive as to duty, but designed to tender undeserved favours to

sinful man. Now he that can think a few, or call them many, dubious actions, that is, actions capable of another, yea, contrary construction, a sufficient promulgation of such a law, as is of so universal extent, as derogates, at least, in one instance of so great moment, from a law so firmly and solemnly established, without any known provision for its honour, injured by so many sins: and finally, that tenders such great favours to the transgressors of it, may believe what he pleases. I must own this one consideration is with me enough to sink that notion.

But now to conclude this whole matter, upon which we have dwelt so long; upon the nicest survey of all occurrences in the heathen world, I can discern nothing that savours of any acquaintance with that forgiveness that is with God; unless it is that generally entertained notion of the placability of their deities. This notion, I make no doubt, had its rise from revelation, and was continued by tradition. And several things did concur to the preservation of this, while other notices that had the same rise were lost; the apparent necessity of it to man in his present sinful condition; the suitableness of it to lay a foundation for that worship, to which the remaining natural notices of a Deity urged them, and which was of indispensable necessity toward the support of human government; the darkness and blindness of men, as to the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the holiness of God's nature, and the strong inclination all men have to be favourable, even to their own faults, did contribute not a little toward its support. Finally, this placability did not so much respect the one true God, of whom they had very little knowledge, as their own fictitious deities, which they put in the room of the true God. And it is obvious, that when men took upon them to set up gods, they would be sure to frame such as might agree with their own apprehensions, and pass by their faults with as little difficulty as they committed them. Whatever there is as to this, we have no reason to think that this is a natural notice, it being neither self-evident, nor certainly deducible from principles that are such.

CHAP. XI.

Proving the insufficiency of natural religion to eradicate our inclinations to sin, or subdue its power.

I THINK we have said enough to demonstrate the insufficiency of natural religion, to satisfy us as to the way how we may obtain the removal of guilt, or the pardon of sin. Let us now see whether it is able to remove the corruption of nature, and subdue or eradicate our inclinations to sin; but before we enter directly on this, it will not be impertinent, if it is not plainly necessary, that we say somewhat concerning the nature of this corruption. We shall therefore offer the few following hints concerning it.

I. It is most certain, that man has corrupt inclinations. I think this will scarcely be denied; since it is beyond contradiction evident, that the bulk of mankind in all ages, have run headlong into those courses which reason condemns as contrary to the law, under which we are

made. The law condemns, reason justifies the law, and proclaims those courses unworthy of us; conscience checks and sometimes torments, and yet sinners run on. Can all this be without corrupt inclinations swaying, yea, as it were, forcibly driving that way? No surely.

II. It is certain, that not only there are such inclinations in man, but that they are hugely strong and forcible. Our own reason condemns those actions, and crying shame on the sinner's conscience presages the resentments of the righteous God. The evil effects of them are visible, and they are felt to be destructive to our health, ruining to our reputation and estates, inconsistent with our inward peace; yea, in not a few instances, human law provides terrible punishments: and yet, in spite of all those strong mounds, we are carried down with the stream: nor can the most forcible rational considerations, from interest, honour, or prudence, stop our career. Certainly the force of inclination, that carries over all those, must be great.

III. It seems plainly natural and congenial to us; I shall not nicely inquire in what sense it is so. I am far from thinking, that our natures as at first made, were created with it. I have said enough before to prove this impossible: but I mean, that as our natures now are, however they came to be so, it is an inseparable appendage of them, cleaves to them, and proceeds not merely from custom, and is not acquired, though it is oft improved by custom. Now this seems evident from many things. 1. The universality of it. All men, in all ages, in all places, and in all circumstances, have such vicious inclinations. I do not say that every individual is proud, ambitious, covetous, revengeful, passionate, and lustful. No, but every one has some one or other or the like of these, breaking out; which says, the spring is within and is strong; though the constitution of our bodies, the climates we live under, our education and way, manner and circumstances of life, have dammed in some of them, and cut out channels for others of them. Now it is plainly unaccountable how all men should be thus corrupt, if not naturally so. No parallel instance, in any sort, can be given, where any thing not natural and *congenial*, at least as to its principle and inclination, has obtained such a universal sway. 2. It waits not till we are grown and formed by education, custom, engagement, and inventions; but makes strong, discernible, and sensible eruptions in infancy, and childhood. As soon as we are capable, and very oft, while one would think us scarcely so, by reason of age, we are proud, revengeful, covetous, &c. which says, this is *congenial*. 3. It is oft seen, that those corruptions break out in our young years, which neither education, example, circumstances, nor any thing else, save a corrupted nature, can give any encouragement to. 4. Yea more, how strong are these inclinations, and that very early, which are discouraged, opposed, borne down, and have all outward occasions cut off from them. One is passionate among calm people, though he is punished for it, and sees it not. Another is ambitious and proud amongst sober people, in mean circumstances, where there is no example to excite ambition, no theatre to act it upon, and beginnings are curbed by precept, instruction, reproof, chastisements, and example. 5. Those things are evidently interwoven with, and strengthened by the very constitutions of our body and the climate under which we live. Hence there are domestic and national vices, which cleave to some families and nations. 6. The best, the

most sober, and freest from discernible eruptions of corruption, yet do own they find the inclinations strong, and driving them into indiscernible acts correspondent to them. 7. They who deny the force and being of these inclinations, and who pretend the will of man able to master all these, yet cannot but own, that there are such inclinations; and as for the pretended ability of the will to conquer them, they give the least proof of it, who pretend most to it: for if the will is thus able, and if, as they pretend, they have sufficient moral arguments which persuade to it, why is it not done? What stops it? 8. I shall only further offer the testimonies of some few among the heathens. Timeus the Locrian, who lived before Plato, tells us in his discourses, "that vitiosity comes from our parents and first principles, rather than from negligence and disorder of public manners; because we never depart from those actions, which lead us to imitate the primitive sins of our parents,"* Plato tells us, that, "in times past, the divine nature flourished in men; but at length it mixed with mortal, and human custom prevailed to the ruin of mankind: and from this source, there followed an inundation of evils on men. Hence he calls corruption the natural disease, or disease of nature, because the nature of mankind is greatly degenerate and depraved, and all manner of disorders infest human nature: and men being impotent, are torn in pieces by their own lusts, as by so many wild horses. Hence Democritus is said to affirm the diseases of the soul to be so great, that if it were opened, it would appear to be a sepulchre of all manner of evils. Aristotle tells us, that there is in us somewhat naturally repugnant to right reason."† Seneca, epistle 50, gives us a very remarkable account of his thoughts in this matter. The whole were worthy to be transcribed, but it is too long. I shall translate a part of it. "Why do we deceive ourselves? Our evil is not from without; it is fixed in our very bowels. *Alibi*, All sins are in all men, but all do not appear in each man: he that hath one sin hath all. We say, that all men are intemperate, avaricious, luxurious, malignant; not that these sins appear in all; but because they may be, yea, are in all, although latent. A man may not be innocent, though he do no hurt. Sins are perfect, before they break forth into effect." It is worthy of our observation, what Mr Gale tells us, after he has quoted these words, that Jansenius breaks forth into a rapture upon hearing these philosophers philosophize more truly about the corruption of man's nature, than Pelagians and others of late.

But the "Oracles of Reason" tells us, that it is denied, "that the lapse of nature is universal, because some, through the course of their lives, have proved more inclinable or prone to virtue than to vice." I have spoken to this before, but I add: 1. This is not enough, they are more prone to virtue than vice: for the question is, whether they have inclinations to vice, and not, whether the contrary are stronger? 2. This cannot be pretended to be the case with many. Now, since the question is about a religion sufficient for all mankind, if any of them have such a distemper, and natural religion provide no cure, it is insufficient. 3. It is not, whether there are men that have been prone to some virtues, and averse from some vices, possibly scandalous sins? But

* Gale's Court of the Gentiles, Part 1. lib. 1. cap. 4. par. 2.

† Arist. Ethic, lib. 1. cap. 13.

whether there have been men inclined to no sin, prone to all virtue? If they assert such a one, show us the man. We cannot believe any such, since all we know are otherwise, till we see a condescension. 4. It is not the business whether men have done virtuous acts ordinarily, that is, the material acts of virtue: for corruption may run freely out in this hidden channel. A man may be ambitious, proud, and live among persons, with whom vice is decried, open vice I mean, and therefore affects a great exactness as to morality. This is good; but this is all but a sacrifice to ambition. One lust is the principal idol, all the rest are sacrificed to it. Corruption turns not troublesome, and is pleased, if it get vent any way. A strong spring, if it may get a vent under ground, may press a vent above; yet it will easily be restrained there.

Now this being the case plainly with man, it is impossible for him to reach happiness, while this corruption remains; nor can he be sure of acceptance with God. While things are thus, nature is imperfect, man is out of order: reason, the nobler part, is under; and passions, the brutal part, bear the sway. This is more unseemly, than to see "servants on horses, while princes walk on foot." There is continual occasion for remorse, checks, challenges of conscience, and fears of the resentment of a holy God. There can be no firm confidence of access to God, or near fellowship with him, while we entertain his enemies in our bosom; nay, have them interwoven, as it were, with our natures.

The deists, I know, make a horrible outcry against Christians, for asserting this corruption of nature. Herbert, in his book *De Veritate*, has many bitter invectives against the asserters of it; and yet, overcome with evidence of truth, he is obliged frequently to acknowledge it plainly: yea, not only does he acknowledge it, but he pleads this directly, in excuse of the most abominable wickedness. After he has told us, that the temperament or constitution of our bodies has a powerful influence to sway us to some sins, he subjoins, "For which reason I do not think that those ought to be condemned in a trifling matter, who commit sin from something of a constitutional habit of body. Precisely therefore as we cannot in justice bring an accusation against a man for laziness, who is under the influence of a lethargy, or condemn a man for immoderate thirst, who is labouring under dropsy. So neither ought the same aggravation of crime, to be charged against those, who are prompted rather by passion to indulge in lust, and commit murder, than lead to such acts from the power of absolutely evil dispositions. But withal I do not wish to be reckoned the patron of vice. I only assert that we are bound to pronounce a less severe sentence against those who seem to sin, as it were, from some peculiar bodily temperament." Well, here is a handsome excuse for vice. We must be as far from condemning him, who prompted by passion, slays, and murders, or hurried on by lust, commits rapes and adulteries; as of censuring him, who is sick of a lethargy, for his laziness and indisposition to act; or one that's hydroptic, for his immoderate thirst. This divinity will please profane men to a degree. The salvo he subjoins is very frivolous, and deserves rather contempt than an answer. But to leave this, it is plain, that there are such inclinations, and that if they are not rooted out, we are undone. What though men might have hopes, if they but erred once, that they might easily obtain remission; yet sure it must confound

them, when they still sin on, and that out of inclination. Unless therefore natural religion is able to cure this disease, and eradicate those inclinations, it serves to no valuable purpose, at least, it is insufficient as to the great ends of religion, our own happiness, or acceptance with God. And that really it cannot do so, will be clear by the following considerations.

I. If this corruption is congenial to our natures, as the above mentioned arguments go near to demonstrate, and the Christian religion fully proves, it is evident, that there must be some change wrought upon our natures. Now this is more than natural religion can pretend to, which knows nothing of regeneration, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit of grace. I know Plato and some others have talked of inspiration, and some aids of God; but this was all but chat, amusement, and a few tinkling words, which might please the ears; but what evidence could they give, that any such thing was attained, or attainable!

II. Though this were given up; yet of whatever nature this corruption and impotency is, call it natural or moral, it is certain that it is strong: natural religion cannot give sufficient security that it is practicable to eradicate it. We know that some streams of this corruption may be dammed in, some of the top branches lopt off, and some of the fruits of it may be plucked. This, in so far as it is done, is good for mankind, and useful in society. Some of the philosophers have gone a great way in it, and thereby have shamed most who are called Christians. But what is all this to the eradicating of corruption, purifying the minds of men, and universal conformity in heart to the rule of duty? The attainments of philosophers need not here be talked of. Their virtues were but shows and shadows of them. Search to the bottom, and you will find, that what they called self-denial, was only a piece of delicate interest in order to reach self-ends. It was but a parting with one thing pleasant to ourselves, to gain a greater, which is selfishness to the height. As for that self-denial, which Christianity teaches, it was not heard of, or known in the least. Liberality was but a mere trade of pride, which values no gifts, provided it has the glory of being liberal—modesty was the art of concealing our vanity—civility, but an affected preference of other men before ourselves, to conceal how much we value ourselves above all the world—bashfulness, but an affected silence in those things which lusts make men think of with pleasure—benevolence, or the desire of obliging other men, but a secret desire of obliging ourselves, by getting them to befriend us at other times—gratitude, but an impatience to acquit ourselves of an obligation with a shamefacedness for having been too long beholden to others, for some favour received. So that all these pretended virtues, in general, have only been so many guards made use of by self-love, to prevent our darling and secret vices from appearing outwardly. All these are no evidences, what may be done towards the removal of corrupt inclinations. Nor indeed can nature's light satisfy us that it is practicable. Can it show us the man that has done it? This were somewhat to the purpose, could he be named. But this cannot be. Will it tell us that we have a power to do it? But this is somewhat that we see and find by experience, the strongest and most convincing of all arguments, not to be true. We find we may restrain or forbear some outward actions, but we have no experience of a power to lay aside or divest ourselves of inclinations so deeply rooted.

Besides, they, who talk of this power, whereof others have no experience, are liable to be questioned upon several other things which they cannot fairly or satisfyingly answer. Why do not they more than others who find it not, but complain of the want of this power? Why do not they show, that those inclinations are eradicated which they own should be laid aside, which they assert they have a power to lay aside, and which they say they have been long trying to overcome? The world will be forward to judge, at least the thinking part of mankind will be so, that they are rather misled by some fond speculations to judge they have a power they really want, than that this practical proof should fail, which seems scarcely capable of an answer.—Now will men be effectually engaged in a work so difficult, which they are never like to bring to an issue? Will they not rather choose to yield to the conqueror than engage in a war that must last while they last, and that without prospect of conquest, and being masters at last? Yea, have they not done so? Who will be induced to such an undertaking without encouragement?

III. If this is practicable, yet it must be owned extremely difficult, and what men will not easily be engaged in. Inclinations are deeply rooted, strengthened by custom, and in most advantaged by temptations whereof the world is full. Now if natural religion is supposed able to persuade to such an undertaking, it must be well furnished with strong motives and inducements. Whence shall those be fetched? From the rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice on the other side time? We have heard how short the accounts of nature's light of these are. The impressions of these were always more deeply rooted in the vulgar, than the philosophers; yet they had no such effect. It is plain, outward encouragements do not attend the practice of virtue. There remains only then the beauty of virtue itself. Of this the philosophers have talked wonderful things. But the mischief of it is, it was but talk when they missed other things, they could, even with their dying breath, as Brutus, one of the adepts is said to have done, call virtue but an empty name. They lived otherwise than they talked, the best of them not excepted. Men may please themselves with refined speculations of the excellency of virtue; but it is not this alone that can sway corrupt man. It is not the question, what virtue really is; but what men think of it, and can be made to see it. And it is certain, all the philosophers could never persuade the world of it; and no wonder, for they could not persuade themselves. Mankind have had other thoughts, and it must be other views than nature can give, that will beat them out of this. Another poet plainly opens the case, "however unwilling to confess the fact, it is nevertheless true, that the multitude judge of friendship by the principle of utility. The first object is to ascertain, not what is in accordance with honesty, but what is most advantageous: and thus it is, that faithfulness rises and falls with fortune. Nor will you find one in a thousand who considers virtue worthy of his regard. To him the beauty of rectitude is nothing if he has not its rewards in prospect, and it rather grieves him that he has been gratuitously upright." Here is the true state of the case. But come closely up to the point, this beauty of virtue is not discernible till we have made some progress in it. While corrupt inclinations are in their vigour in the heart, such a beauty is not easily seen. 2. It is a beauty too fine to be perceived

by the vulgar eyes, or indeed by any, without deeper and nicer consideration, than most of men can go to the charge of. 3. Alone it is not sufficient to support and carry on in so hazardous an undertaking. 4. This advantage is not to be felt, till the virtue be obtained. It is a question whether it will be attained. So that it is plain, natural religion wants motives to engage effectually to this.

IV. It is still further considerable to the purpose, that these vicious inclinations are strong, if not strongest in those, who have neither capacity to dive into those few refined considerations, which enforce the practice of virtue, and the subduing of corruption, nor indeed to understand them, when proposed, nor have they time or leisure to attend to the discourses of the philosophers, when they are taught, or money to purchase them. And natural religion provides no teachers, at least, if we take it according to the accounts we get from the deists, who bear such a terrible grudge to a standing ministry, and have so often in their mouths that reflection of Dryden, "priests of all religions are the same." Now what a sad case are poor men in, who are solicited by outward temptations and pushed on by strong inclinations, and have so small assistance given them by natural religion.

V. As motives are wanting, so the work is not easily carried on, the way of management is difficult, and the directions given us by the philosophers or others, are exceedingly unsatisfactory. Some of them are impossible, such as the entire laying aside our affections; others of them ridiculous, such as that direction above mentioned out of Plato, for the purification of our souls by music and mathematics, &c. Others, and indeed most of them, only tell us what we are to do, bid us do the thing, but tell us not how to set about it; some of them only tell us how to conceal inward corruption or divert it. And perhaps I should not say amiss, if I should say, that what the best moral philosophers either aimed at or attained, was only to dam in corruption on one side, to let it run out at another; or to make that run in a secret channel, which run open before. It were long to examine their several directions. The learned Herbert gives us a summary of them, which I shall here present the reader with. 1. "We should suppress all our vicious affections." This is but to advise the thing, without telling us how it is to be done. 2. "That we expiate our sins by deep repentance, and by the instituted sacrifices or rites." This is only a remedy for guilt, and an ill one too, as has been cleared above. 3. "That we avoid the society of evil men." But then we must go out of the world, or at least, out of the heathen world. 4. "That we use the company of good men." But where shall we find them amongst those who have no more but natural religion? 5. "That we inquire carefully what is to be done, and what is not to be done:" But the question is, when we know it, how shall we get the one avoided and the other followed, considering we have a strong aversion to good, and inclination to evil? 6. "That our sins, which arise from human frailty, should be corrected or laid aside." But still the question occurs, how is this to be done? 7. "That we should use supplications and prayers to the gods, as the priests prescribe." But for what, and upon what ground? And what will this help the matter?

VI. To conclude this argument, the universal experience of mankind bears testimony to the weakness of natural religion. Nothing in

this matter was ever done, or done to purpose, save where revelation obtained. Should we narrowly scan the lives, not only of the vulgar, but of the heathen philosophers, as Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Plutarch, Cato, and Brutus, we might easily pull off the mask and discover how little it was that they attained in this matter, or rather, nothing at all. Yea, even a Socrates himself would not be able to stand before an impartial inquirer. I believe he could not give a good account of his amours, and those practical instructions which he is said to have given his scholar Alcibiades. He repressed well the vanity and pride of other philosophers: but perhaps, nay I need not say perhaps, with greater pride; yea even his death, the most applauded part of his whole conduct, might be unmasked, and deprived of the unjust eulogies, which some have made on it, who, it may be, never read the accounts we have of it, or seriously considered his carriage on that occasion. It is true he was unjustly put to death, and behaved very resolutely: but whether he fell not a sacrifice to his own pride, as much as to the malice of his enemies, may be questioned. This I say not to detract from these great men, whom I admire, considering their state; but to let us see, that they went not so high as some would have us believe.

In fine, till revealed religion appeared, nothing was seen in the world of true piety or religion, of mortification of sin, or holiness of life. The natural notices could never make one pious, or indeed moral. Whereas Christianity, upon its first appearance, in a moment, as it were, made millions so. And they who have rejected it, and set up for heathenism again, under the new, but injurious name of deism, are no friends to holiness of life, piety towards God, sobriety in their own way, nor righteousness among men. How mighty saints do Blount, Hobbes, Spinoza, Uriel, Accosta, and others make.

I designed to have proceeded further, to demonstrate the insufficiency of natural religion to answer the ends of religion, by the consideration of its insufficiency to support under the troubles of life or amongst the terrors of death: but upon second thought I judged, after what has been said, it was not needful. Besides, if any look but at it, they may easily see it utterly insufficient to this purpose, as it is indeed to the other great ends of religion. If the well founded prospect of future rewards, and a clear knowledge of the nature and excellency of things eternal and not seen, the present intimations of divine love, in cross dispensations, the supports of divine powerful grace under them, the usefulness of those calamities, by virtue of the divine ordination and concurrent influence of the divine Spirit, verified in the experience of the sufferers, are laid aside, as natural religion does, which knows nothing of these, all that men can say to comfort under affliction, or arm against the horrors of death, is but an unprofitable amusement, or, at least, like rattles and other toys we give to children, that do not, in the least, ease them of the pains they are under, but do, for a little, divert the mind, while they are looked at: but as soon as the first impression is over, which those new toys make on the mind, the sense of pain recurs again, with that redoubled force, which it always has, when it immediately succeeds either ease or want of sense. And if it is really violent, these things will not avail, no not to divert trouble for a little. It is but a sorry comfort to tell me, that others are troubled as well as I, or worse; that death, which I fear, will end it; that I

must bear it; that I have other enjoyments, which yet present pain will not allow me to relish. Yet such are the best consolations natural religion affords.

CHAP. XII.

Wherein the proof of the insufficiency of natural religion is concluded from a general view of the experience of the world.

As a conclusion to, and illustration of what has hitherto been discoursed, for demonstrating the insufficiency of natural religion, I shall here offer a six-fold view of the experience of the world in general, without descending to particular instances, which have in part been touched at, and offered before, and are every where to be met with.

I. Let us view man as a creature made for this end, to “glorify God and enjoy him,” abstracting from the consideration of his corruption, which the deists sometimes deny, and sometimes, with difficulty, do but in part admit. And let us consider him as left to pursue this noble end, in the use of his rational faculties, under the conduct of the mere light of nature. If we consider him thus, and inquire into the experience of the world, how far he has reached this end, we shall find such an account, as will much confirm the truth we have hitherto asserted, and weaken the credit of the deists, their imaginary sufficiency of nature’s light to conduct man to the end for which he was made.

If we look to the vulgar, the generality of mankind, we shall find them in a posture much like that wherein the prophet saw the princes in the vision, with their backs to the chief end, never once thinking for what they were made, pursuing other things; every one, as Iust led him, following his own humour, walking in a direct and open contradiction to that law, which was originally designed for the guide of our life, and the directory to bliss, that happiness, which all would have, though they know not where to find it.

If we look at the philosophers, we may see them “sitting up late, rising early, eating the bread of carefulness,” wearying themselves in the search of happiness, running into some hundreds of different notions about it; and yet not one of them hitting, or at least, understanding the true one. And as little agreed about the way to it. We may hear them talk of virtue, but never levelling it as its proper end, “the glory of God.” We may hear them urging its practice, but not upon the proper grounds. Rarely any regard to the authority of God, the only formal ground of obedience. Instead of plain rules useful to mankind, they obtrude cryptic and dark sentences, rather designed to make others admire them, than to be useful to any. They every where tack their own fancies to the divine law, a weight sufficient to sink the other, as to its truth, in the apprehensions of men, or at least as to its usefulness. They offer a rule defective in most things of moment, corrupt in many, ruining in not a few instances, destitute of any other authority, than their own say, or *ipse dixit*, unintelligible to the vulgar, and naked as to inducements to obey it.

II. Let us consider man as made for this end; but barred from its

attainment, by the interposition of those great hinderances and rubs which now are certainly in its way ; I mean darkness, guilt, and corruption. There are stones in the way. How has nature's light acquitted itself as to the rolling them away ? Truly they have been like Sisyphus's stone, as fast as they have rolled them up, as fast they have recoiled and fallen back on them.

As to that darkness that has overspread the minds of men ; if we look at the vulgar, we find them like blind men, content to jog on in the dark, mired every where, stumbling frequently, and falling sometimes dangerously ; yet satisfied with their case, not looking after light : not so much because they want it not, as because they have no notion of it, or its usefulness ; like blind men that never saw the sun, and therefore suffer the loss of it with less regret, than they who once saw, but now have lost their eyes. They follow as they are led ; are ready to take hold of any hand, though of one as blind as themselves, and are never sensible of the mistake, till sunk where they cannot get out again. The philosophers indeed seem a little more sensible of their case, and fancying truth hid in Democritus's well, dive for it, but lose their breath before they come at it, and fall into dangerous eddies or whirlpools, where they lose themselves instead of finding truth ; or trying to fetch it up, but with a line too short, they fetch up some weeds that are nourished by their nearness to the waters, and please themselves with those. After all their painful endeavours, we find them groping in the dark, as to useful and necessary knowledge of God, or the way of worshipping him ; of ourselves, our happiness, our sins, the way of obtaining pardon, our duty, or our corruption. As to guilt ; if we look at the case of mankind, and his endeavours for the removal of it, we find the vulgar drowned in endless despair, or fatal security ; like men at their wits' end, trying all ways that fear, superstition, or racked imagination can supply, and still unsatisfied with their own inventions, they are ready to try all ways that self-designing men, or even the devil can suggest to them, sparing no cost, no travel, no pain. They stand not to give "the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul." The philosophers either think, through their pride, they have no sin, because they are not so bad, quite so bad as the vulgar ; or, if they still retain some sense of sin, they are driven into the utmost perplexity, being convinced of the wickedness of the measures taken by the vulgar, or at least of their uselessness and impertinency, and yet unable to find out better ; they try to divert their thoughts from a sore they know no plaster for—As to corruption ; we find all confessing it, crying out of the disease ; and indeed it is rather because it will not hide, that the sore runs, than because it is painful to many. The vulgar despair of stemming the tide, finding it easiest to swim with the stream, are willingly carried headlong. The body of philosophers are indeed like weak water-men on a strong stream, they look one way, but are carried another. Though they pretend they aim at ruining of vice, yet really they do it no hurt, save that they speak against it. A few of the best of them being ashamed to be found amongst the rest swimming, or rather carried down the stream on the surface, that is, in open vice, have dived to the bottom ; but really made as much way under water, as the other above.

III. Let us view mankind under the goodness and forbearance of

God, these helps which some think sufficient : this word is used, or rather abused as a blind in a matter of very great importance ; and men who use it will scarce tell, if they can, even in the subject of the present discourse, in what sense they use it. But let it be as it will, some pretend the works of Providence, particularly God's goodness and forbearance, sufficient. Well, let us see the experience of the world in this.

If we view mankind under this consideration, we may see them so far from being led to repentance, that most part never once took notice of this conduct of God. Others, and they not a few, have abused it to the worst purposes. Because judgment against an evil work has not been speedily executed, therefore their hearts were wholly set in them to do evil. The more inquisitive have raised a charge against God as encouraging wickedness. And as for the favours they enjoy themselves, they looked on them, not as calls to repentance, but as rewards for their pretended virtues, and scanty ones too, below the worth of them. Not a few of them have gone near to arraign God of injustice for lesser afflictions they were trysted with ; while others have been entangled and tossed to and fro by cross appearances. So that none have by this goodness of God been led to repentance.

IV. Let us view men living in the place where revelation obtains, or where the Christian religion is professed and taught, but renouncing and rejecting it, and in profession owning only natural religion : such are the deists among us. If we consider their words, they talk indeed that natural religion is sufficient ; and to make it indeed appear so, some of them have adorned it with jewels borrowed from the temple of God, ascribing to nature's light discoveries in religion, which originally were owing to revelation, and were never dreamed of where it did not obtain ; though being once discovered, they have gained the consent of sober reason. But now we are not considering the speech, but the power of these men : not what they say of the sufficiency of natural religion, but what real experience they have of it, and what evidence they give of this in their practice.

If we thus consider them, we find, that although when they have a mind to impose their notion of the sufficiency of natural religion upon others, they pretend, that it is clear, as to a great many points or principles, that are confessedly of the greatest moment in religion ; yet while they begin to speak more plainly and freely their own inward sentiments, they show that they are not fixed, no not about the very principles themselves, even those of them which are of the greatest consequence. Mr Gildon, publisher of the *Oracles of Reason*, is not far from asserting two anti-gods, one good, the other evil ; and so falls in with the Persians.* Blount favours the opinion of Ocellus Lucanus, about the world's eternity,† and consequently denies, or at least, hesitates about creation. The immateriality of the soul seems to be flatly rejected by them all. Nor do they seem very firm about its immortality.‡ In short, after they have been at so much pains to trim up natural religion, and make it look sufficient like, they yet express a hesitancy about its sufficiency to eternal life. We have heard Herbert to this purpose already. Blount in a letter to Dr Sydenham prefixed to the *Deists' Reasons*, tells plainly, that it is not safe to trust deism alone,

* *Oracles of Reason*, p. 164.

† *Ibid*, p. 212, 228.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 154, 187, &c.

without Christianity joined to it.* And the deist's hope is summed up in this, in the 4th Chap. of the Summary of the Deist's Reasons, that "there is more probability of his salvation, than of the credulous and ill-living papist:" and that is just none at all.

Nor does their practice give one jot of a better proof of the sufficiency of that religion they profess: yea, it affords convincing evidence of its weakness, uselessness, and utter insufficiency. Their lives show they are not in earnest about any thing in religion. They are Latitudinarians in practice. Their words, their actions, have no savour of a regard to a Deity; but they go on in all manner of impieties in practice, and perhaps in the end, put a period to a wretched life by their own hands, as Blount, Uriel, Accosta, and others have done, and the survivors justify the deed upon trifling and childish reasonings; as not knowing but they may one day be put to use the same shift. I am not in the least deterred from asserting this, by the commendations that the publisher of the Oracles of Reason gives to Mr Blount, as a person remarkable for virtue. If a profane, jocular, and unbecoming treatment of the gravest and most important truths, that belong, even by his own acknowledgment, to natural religion;† yea, and are the principal props of it; and if gross and palpable disingenuity be instances of that virtue he ascribes to him, and evidences of those just and adequate notions of the Deity, in which, he says, Mr Blount was bred up, I could give instances enough from the book itself of such virtues; but I love not to rake in the ashes of the dead. Again, others of the deists, having wearied themselves in chase of a phantom to no purpose, and having neither the grace nor ingenuity to return to the religion they adandoned, either land in downright atheism in principle and practice, or they throw themselves into the arms of the pretended infallible guide; and thereby give evidence how well founded the jesuitical maxim is, "make a man once an atheist, he will soon turn papist."

V. Let us view men living under the gospel, embracing it in profession, but unacquainted with that spirit that gives life and power to its doctrines, precepts, promises, threats, and ordinances. They, besides that they are possessed of all the advantages of nature's light, have moreover the superadded advantages of revelation, and its institutions. They have ministers and parents instructing them, and discipline to restrain them; they are trained up in the faith of future rewards, and instructed in the nature and excellency of them for their encouragement; they have punishments proposed to them to deter them from sin, which they profess to believe; yet if we consider the practice of the generality of such persons, it gives a sufficient evidence, that all this is not enough. Who but a man blind or foolish can then dote so far, as to pretend the light of nature alone sufficient, when it is not so, even when helped by so many necessary improvements.

VI. If we consider the experience of them, who have received the gospel in truth, and felt its power, we find they have indeed reached the ends of religion in part, and have a fair prospect as to further success. Well, what is their sense of the sufficiency of the light or

* Oracles of Reason, p. 87, 91.

† Oracles of Reason at the beginning, account of Blount's life.

nature? Why, if you observe them in their public devotions, you shall hear heavy outcries of their own darkness, weakness, and wickedness; you may hear serious prayers for divine light, and life to quicken them, strengthen and incline them to follow duty, and support them in it, against the power of temptations, which they own themselves unable to master, without the powerful aids of divine grace. If you follow them into their retirements, where the matter is managed betwixt God and them alone, where they are under none of these temptations, to maintain the credit of any received notions, and therefore must be presumed to speak out the practical sense of the state of their case, without any disguise; there you shall find nothing but deep confessions of guilt, darkness, and inability, with earnest cries, prayers, and tears, for supplies of grace: and what they attain in matters of religion, you shall find them freely owning, that it was not they, but the grace of God in them that brought them to this. And the more any is concerned about religion, knows and has attained in it, still you will find him the more sensible of this state of things.

This is but a hint of what might have been said: but I have rather chosen to offer a general scheme of the argument from experience, which every one, from his own private reading and observation, may illustrate with observations and particular instances, than to insist upon it at large, which would have required a volume.

CHAP. XIII.

Wherein we make a transition to the deists' pleas for their opinion, and take particular notice of the articles to which they reduce their catholic religion, give some account of Baron Herbert, the first inventor of this catholic religion, his books, and particularly of that which is inscribed, De Religione Gentilium, as to the matter and scope of it, and the importance of what is therein attempted to the deists' cause.

WE have now proposed and confirmed our opinion; our next business is to inquire more particularly into that of the deists, and consider what they offer for it.

The first set of deists, so far as I can learn, did satisfy themselves with the rejection of all supernatural revelation, and a general pretence, that natural religion was sufficient, without telling the world of what articles it did consist, what belonged thereto, or how far it went. The learned Lord Herbert was the first who did cultivate this notion, and licked deism, and brought it to something of a form. This honour he assumes to himself, glories in it, and we see no ground to dispute this with him. I have met with nothing in any of the modern deists that makes toward this subject, which is not advanced by him, and probably borrowed from his writings. It will not therefore be impertinent to give the reader some account of him.

This Edward Herbert was a descendant from a younger brother of the family of Pembroke. He was brother to the famous George Herbert the divine poet. His education was at Oxford, where he was for some time a fellow commoner in university college there. After he left

the university, he improved himself by travels into foreign nations, and obtained the reputation of a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier.* He was made knight of the Bath at the coronation of King James I. in England, who afterwards sent him as ambassador to Lewis XIII. on behalf of the French protestants: and upon his return he was created Baron of Castle-island in Ireland, and by King Charles the I. anno 1630, he was created a Baron of England, by the title of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and died in 1648.† This learned person having once unhappily apostatized from the religion wherein he was bred into deism; though, as other deists likewise do, he did still seem to own the Church of England; yet he set himself for the maintenance of deism, in his writings. And to this purpose he published some time after 1640, (for I have not the first edition of it) his book *De Veritate*: and shortly after, another *De Causis Errorum*. These two books are for the most part philosophical, and written with some singularity of notion. What is truth in them is rather delivered in a new way, than new; and by the use of vulgar words, in new and uncommon acceptations, and his obscure way of management of his notions, is scarce intelligible to any save metaphysical readers, nor to such, without greater application, than perhaps the matter is worth. I should not think myself concerned in either of these two books, their subject being philosophical, were it not that it is his avowed design in them, to lay a foundation for his peculiar notions in religion.

There are two things, at which Herbert, in these, and his other writings, plainly drives; to overthrow revelation, and to establish natural religion in its room. It is not my design nor province at present, to defend revelation against the efforts of this or any other author, though I think it were a business of no great difficulty to remove what Herbert has said against it; yet since I have mentioned his attempt upon it, I cannot pass it without some short, but just remarks upon his unfair if not disingenuous way of treating revelation.

1. On many occasions, with what candour and ingenuity himself knew, he professeth a great respect to revelation, and particularly to the scriptures, and pretends he designs nothing in prejudice of the established religion: but any one that peruses the books will soon see, that this is only like Joab's kiss, a blind to make his reader secure, and fear no danger from the sword he has under his garment: for notwithstanding of this, he every where insinuates prejudices against all revelation, as uncertain, unnecessary, and of little or no use to any, save those to whom it was originally or rather immediately given.

2. Upon all occasions, and sometimes without any occasion given him from his subject, he makes sallies upon truths of the greatest importance in the Christian religion; such as the doctrines of the corruption of nature, satisfaction of Christ, and the decrees of God, &c. And having represented them disingenuously, or else ignorantly, which I less suspect in a man of his learning, not in that way they are proposed in scripture, or taught by those who maintain them, but under the disguise of gross misrepresentations, mistaken notions, and strained consequences: and having thus put them in beasts' skins, as the primitive persecutors did the Christians, he sets his dogs upon them to worry

* *Geogra. Diction.* See Herbert & Deism. † See also, *Life of Mr George Herbert.*

them; and this without any regard unto the foundation they have in the scriptures, or the evidence of the proofs that may be advanced for the scriptures in general, or these doctrines in particular, and without all consideration of the inconsistency of this way of treating truths plainly taught, and inculcated, as of the greatest importance in the scriptures, with that respect, which upon other occasions he pretends to that divine book.

3. He states wrong notions of the grounds whereupon revelation is received, and overthrows those imaginary ones he has set up, as the reasons of our belief of the scriptures, and then triumphs in his success. How easy is it to set up a man of straw and beat him down with the finger?

4. The Deists generally, and Herbert in particular,* do grant, that the christian revelation has manifestly the advantage of all other pretenders to revelation, as in respect of the intrinsic excellency of the matter, so likewise in respect of the reasons that may be pleaded for its truth. And so certain is this and evident, that one of their number owns,† “that Christianity has the fairest pretensions of any religion now in the world, and exhorts to make a diligent inquiry into it; arguing, that if the pretences of Christianity be well grounded, it cannot be a frivolous and indifferent matter; and he grants further, that the truth of the matters of fact which confirm it, is hardly possible to be denied.” And notwithstanding of this manifest and acknowledged difference betwixt the scriptures and all other pretenders to revelation, when Herbert speaks of revelation, he jumbles all pretenders together without distinction, and urges the faults of the most ridiculous and obviously spurious pretenders against revelation in the general, as if every particular one, and especially Christianity, were chargeable with these faults. Is this candid and fair dealing, to bear the unwary reader in hand, that these palpable evidences of imposture are to be found in all revelations alike, while even they themselves being judges, the scriptures are not concerned in them? Yet this is the way that Christianity is treated by this learned author; and his steps have been closely traced in this piece of scandalous disingenuity, for I can give it no milder name, by Blount and the other writers of the party, as I could make appear by many instances, if need required.

5. Our author makes high pretences to accuracy in searching after truth, and treats all other authors with the greatest scorn and contempt imaginable, as short in that point: yet he seldom states a question fairly, but huddles all up in the dark, especially, when he speaks about revelation, and heaps together difficulties about all the concerns of revealed religion, without any regard to the distinct heads to which they belong. This is a ready way to shake his reader about all truths, but establish him in none.

Other reflections I forbear, though he has given fair occasion for many: but this is not my subject. This part of his discourse has been unadverted on by a learned author, though the book is not come to my hand.‡ The other branch of our author's design, viz. his attempt to

* Religio Laici, p. 9, 10.

† Letter to the Deists, p. 139.

‡ Baxter, more reasons for the Christian Religion, and no reason against it, in the Appendix.

establish the sufficiency of natural religion, is that wherein I am directly concerned. This he only proposes in his book *De Veritate* at the close, with a short explication of his famed five articles, of which more anon; and in a small treatise entitled *Religio Laici*, subjoined to his book *De Causis Errorum*, he further explains them. The design of this last mentioned treatise is to show, that the vulgar can never come to certainty about the truth of any particular revelation, or the preferableness of its pretences unto others, and that therefore of necessity they must sit down satisfied with the religion he offers them, consisting of five articles, agreed to, if we believe him, by all religions.

This religion, consisting of five articles, which we shall exhibit immediately, he attempts to prove sufficient by some arguments in that last mentioned treatise. But the principal proof, on which our author lays the whole stress of his cause, is at large exhibited in another treatise of our author *De Religione Gentilium*, published at Amsterdam, anno 1663, by J. Vossius, son to the great Ger. Joan. Vossius. His pleadings in these and his other writings we shall call to an account by and by.

Herbert, in his treatise *De Religione Gentilium*, pretends, whatever mistakes the Gentile world was under in matters of religion; yet there was as much agreed to by all nations, as was necessary to their eternal happiness. Particularly he tells us, that they were agreed about five articles of natural religion, which he thinks are sufficient, viz. 1. "That there is one supreme God. 2. That he is to be worshipped. 3. That virtue is the principal part of his worship. 4. That we must repent of our sins. 5. That there are rewards and punishments both in this life and that which is to come."*

Charles Blount, who set himself at the head of the Deists some few years ago, in a small treatise entitled *Religio Laici*, printed 1683, which in effect is only a translation of Herbert's book of the same name, inverting a little the order, but without the addition of any one thought of moment; in this treatise, I say, he reckons up the articles of natural religion much after the same manner. 1. "That there is one only supreme God. 2. That he chiefly is to be worshipped, 3. That virtue, goodness, and piety, accompanied with faith in, and love to God, are the best ways of worshipping him. 4. That we should repent of our sins from the bottom of our hearts, and turn to the right way. 5. That there is a reward and punishment after this life."†

Another, in a letter directed to Mr Blount, ascribed A. W. has given us an account of them somewhat different from both the former in seven articles. 1. "That there is one infinite, eternal God, creator of all things. 2. That he governs the world by providence. 3. That it is our duty to worship and obey him as our creator and governor. 4. That our worship consists in prayer to him, and praise of him. 5. That our obedience consists in the rules of right reason, the practice whereof is moral virtue. 6. That we are to expect rewards and punishments hereafter according to our actions in this life;"‡ which includes the soul's immortality, and is proved by our admitting providence. 7. "That when we err from the rules of our duty, we ought to repent and trust in God's mercy for pardon." To the same purpose without any altera-

* *De Religione Gentilium*, p. 186, 210, &c.

† *Religio Laici*, p. 49, 50.

‡ *Oracles of Reason*, p. 197.

tion of moment from what we have above quoted, Herbert reckons up and repeats the same articles in his other treatises.

These other authors do but copy after Herbert. To him the honour of this invention belongs, and he values himself not a little upon it. Let us hear himself. "And thus it is, but not without repeated and accurate examination of all religions, that I have attained to the discovery of these five articles, and in which I reckon myself not less happy than was Archimedes in his great discovery."* He acquaints us, that he consulted divines and writers of all parties, but in vain, for to find the universal religion he sought after: it is not therefore likely, if any had moulded this universal religion, or put it into a form meet for the deists' purpose before him, that it could have escaped his observation and diligence. Now we have had a sufficient view of the articles, to which the deists reduce their religion. Let us next inquire after the proof of this religion; the burden whereof must lean upon Herbert. The deists since his time have added nothing that has a show of proof that I can yet see. Well, after he has in his other treatises, as has been said, proposed and explained his religion, he at length comes to the proof of it in his treatise *De Religione Gentilium*. Here the main strength of his cause lies, and with this we shall mainly deal; yet so as not to overlook any thing that has a show of proof elsewhere in his writings.

In this treatise *De Religione Gentilium*, he makes it his work to illustrate and prove, that the above mentioned five articles were universally believed by people of all religions. This is the proposition at which that whole book aims. In the management of this subject our author gives great proof of diligence, vast reading, and much philological learning. He gives large accounts of the idolatry of the heathens and their pleas for it, or rather of the pleas, which our author thought might be made for it; which has given occasion to several conjectures, as to our author's design in that book, and his other writings.

I find a learned author,† who has bestowed a few short animadversions on this book, inclinable to think it not unlikely, that Lord Herbert's principal design was, if not to justify, yet to excuse the idolatry of the church of Rome. And if one considers how many pleas Herbert makes for the Gentiles' idolatry, and that they are generally such as may serve for the Romanists' purpose: and if it is further considered, that Herbert elsewhere seems, upon many occasions, to found the whole certainty of revelation upon the authority of the church, and that alone, and the vast power he gives to the church as to the appointment of rites, yea, and all the ordinances of worship; if it is further considered how concerned some persons were for an accommodation with the church of Rome at that time, when our author wrote, and how far Herbert was concerned in that party, who stickled for this reconciliation; if, I say, all these things are laid together, this conjecture will not appear destitute of probability. I might add to this, that Herbert makes use of pleas not much unlike those, which are used by the church of Rome to shake protestants out of their faith, that they may at length fall in with the infallible guide. In fine, I dare be bold to undertake the mainte-

* *De Relig. Gent.* p. 218.

† *Abrali. Heidanus de Origine Erroris, Lib. VI. Cap. XI. p. 370.*

nance of this, against any opposer, that Herbert's method followed out, will inevitably make the vulgar atheists; whether he designed by this to make them papists, I know not, nor shall I judge. How far this conjecture will hold, I leave to others to judge. I shall only add this one thing more, that the seeming opposition of Herbert's design unto popish principles, and his thrusts at the Romish clergy, will not be sufficient to clear him of all suspicion, in this matter, with those, who have seriously perused the books written by papists in disguise, on design to shake the faith of the vulgar sort of protestants, in some of which, there is a great appearance at first view of a designed overthrow of popery, and as hard things said against the Romish clergy. Good watermen can look one way and row another. What there was of this will one day be manifest. The deists maintain, that "their religion, consisting of the above named five articles, is sufficient." It is the avowed design of Herbert in this book to assert this and prove it, and yet he spends it wholly in proving this proposition, "that these five articles did universally obtain." Now it seems of concernment to inquire, why Herbert should be at so much pains to prove this. How does universal reception of these articles establish his religion, and of what consequence is it to the deists' cause?

For clearing this, it must be observed, that it is a common religion that Herbert is inquiring after, which may be equally useful to all mankind; and nothing can agree to this, which is not commonly received. And Herbert has before laid down this for a principle, that the only way to distinguish common notices from those which are not so, is universal reception. This according to him is the only sure criterion.* But to set this matter in a full light, I shall make appear, that a failure in this attempt, to prove that these were universally agreed to, is inevitably ruining to the deists' cause and plea for a common religion; though the proof of this point will be very far from inferring that there is a common religion, as shall be cleared afterwards. And this will give further light into the reasons of Herbert's undertaking.

To this purpose then it is to be observed, that the deists being agreed about the rejection of the Christian religion, and that revelation, whereon it is founded; they are for ever barred from the acceptance of any other revelation as the measure of religion that the world knows: for they own no revelation ever had so fair a plea, and such probable grounds to support its pretensions, as the Christian has. However therefore the generality of the deists were satisfied to lay aside the Christian religion, which will not allow them that liberty in following the courses they are resolved upon, without putting any thing into its place; yet the more sober sort saw, that to reject this religion and put none in its place, would, by the world, be counted plain atheism, which deservedly is odious in the world. Therefore they saw there was a necessity of substituting one in its place. Now since revelation was rejected, nothing remained, but to pretend, that reason was able to supply the defect and afford a sufficient religion, a religion that is able to answer all the purposes for which others pretend Revealed Religion necessary. When once they were come this length, it was easy to see that it might be inquired whether this rational religion lay within the

* De Veritate, p. 55.

reach of every man's reason, or was only to be found out by persons of learning. If it is pretended, that only persons of learning, application, and uncommon abilities could attain the discovery of this religion, the difficulties whereon the pretenders are cast, are obvious. What shall then become of their argument against revealed religion, that it is not "universal, that it is not received by all mankind, that therefore it is not attended with sufficient evidence." Upon this supposition there is a fair ground for retorting the argument, with not less, if not more force, against natural religion.

Again, what shall become of that plea, which they make for natural religion, that "God must provide all his creatures in the means necessary for attaining that happiness they are capable of?" May they not, on this supposition, be urged, that, according to it, the vulgar are not provided with such means? Nor will it avail to pretend, that those who are capable of this discovery, are obliged to teach others the laws of nature. For it may be inquired, must the people take all on trust from them, or see with their own eyes? If they must take all on trust, then is there not here a fair occasion for charging priestcraft upon them, who blame it so much in others? Will not this oblige our wits, men of reason and learning, to turn creed and system makers? Further, what will they say of their own neglect and the neglect of the learned world in this matter? How will they reconcile this to the notion of God's goodness, of which they talk so much, to suspend the happiness of the greater part of mankind on their care and diligence, who quite neglect them, but keep up their knowledge, and thereby expose the poor vulgar to inevitable ruin? Moreover, if they set up for teachers, they must show their credentials. Finally, there is no place, upon this supposition, left for the strongest pleas for a sufficient religion, that is common to mankind, which are taken from the nature of God and man, and their mutual relation: because all these arguments conclude equally for all mankind, and so are not adapted to assert some peculiar prerogative in one above another. Nor are any able to justify a claim to any further ability this way, than he can satisfy the world of, by the effects of it. When a man pretends to no other abilities, than such as are due to human nature, that he is a man is sufficient to justify his claim; but if he pretend to some eminency in natural or acquired enduements above others, he must give such proofs of it as the nature of the thing requires; that is, he must make appear, that he has that ability by actings proportionable to the nature and degree of the power he claims; and further than this is done, no wise man will believe him. It will not help them out here, to say, that they only of better capacities, and who have more leisure, are able to discover this natural religion; but the vulgar are capable of judging and seeing with their own eyes when it is proposed. For besides that all the former difficulties, or most of them, recur here, still it may be inquired, is this made appear? The difficulties on this side are insurmountable.

Wherefore, of necessity, they are cast on this, to maintain, "that every man is able to find out and discover what is sufficient for himself in matters of religion." But now when this is asserted, if the experience of the world lie against them, and it be found, as is commonly supposed, that many nations, nay, the far greater part of mankind, had no such religion, this will much prejudice their opinion, about every man's

having this ability of finding out a religion, or as much in religion as was necessary to his own happiness.

How will they persuade the world of such an ability, if experience cross ; yea if it be not made appear to favour them ? It is commonly thought, and we have made it appear, that the wisest men, when they essayed what power they had of this sort, fondly blundered, and fell short of satisfying either themselves or others ; and that the world generally acknowledged the want of any experience of this ability, and therefore looked after revelations with that greediness, that laid them open to be imposed on, by every vain pretender to supernatural revelation. Now if things are allowed to be thus : how shall they prove man possessed of this power, if they are cut off from the advantage of the usual fountain of conviction, in matters of this nature ? What is the way we come to know, that all men have a power of understanding, or that such a power is due to his nature ? Is it not hence, that wherever we meet with men, we find them exerting the acts of understanding. And the like may be said of his other powers. Now if it is once admitted, that there are single persons, nay, whole nations, yea more, many nations that have no experience of this pretended ability, in reference to matters of religion, how will they ever be able to persuade the world that all men have it ? More especially, if it be admitted, that the learned themselves were here defective, as to that which persons of the meanest abilities and least leisure are supposed able for. This will look very ill, if a man who toils all his days at the plough and harrow, could make this discovery, how could a man of learning and application find it hard !

In a word, if things are thus stated, as is generally supposed, has been already proven, and shall be further cleared anon, then there is little left them to pretend for this natural and universal ability of mankind in matters of religion, if not, perhaps, to tell us a story of God's being obliged, in point of goodness, to endue all mankind with a capacity, whereof there is no evidence in experience ; yea, which the experience of the world plainly declares them to want. But this will not easily take with men of sobriety and sense : for it is not more evident, that there is a God, than, this God must do whatever is proper and suitable for him to do. And, on the contrary, that it was not necessary or proper for him to do any thing that really he has not done. If, then, any shall pretend it becoming or necessary for God to do any thing, which experience shows he has not done, he will be so far from obtaining credit with the world, that, on the contrary, he will justly fall under the suspicion of atheism, and an evil design against God. For to say, that God, in point of goodness, was obliged to do this, which experience shows he has not done, is plainly to say, God acted not as became him. There was therefore a plain necessity of undertaking to prove experience on their side, if deism was to be supported.

If the common apprehensions of men, who enjoy the light of Christianity, with respect to the state of the heathen world, are well grounded, all the pretences of deists as to the sufficiency of natural religion are for ever ruined, and quite subverted. It was but necessary, therefore, that the learned Herbert, who undertook to maintain the cause, should attempt to show, that experience was on their side, and that in fact a religion in itself sufficient did universally obtain. And he had

the more reason to be concerned in this matter, because he avows it as his opinion, that without a supposition of such a universal religion as the deists do plead for, Providence cannot be maintained. And as it is clear that the author thinks, that providence is not to be maintained without a universal religion; so it is sufficiently evident, that this universal religion is not to be maintained, if experience lies against it.

Here then was a plain necessity for undertaking this argument, and proving, or, at least, pretending to prove, that all mankind had a sufficient religion, or were able to know all that was necessary. For we see the whole frame of deism falls to the ground, if this is overthrown. This therefore was an undertaking worthy of our noble author's great parts, long experience, great charity to mankind, and the great concern he professes to find in himself for the vindication of Providence. And sure if such a man, after so much pains, has failed in the proof of this point, any that may succeed him, may justly despair of success. He read all the heathen authors to find this universal religion, and he was as willing and desirous to find it as any man. And he has given in this learned book evidence enough of his reading. But since no religion was to be admitted, save that whereon all men were agreed, it was wisely done by our author, that he reduced this universal creed to a few articles. For one who knew so much of the state of the world, could not but see, that they were not very many wherein they were agreed.

Well, he undertakes and goes through with the work, and concludes with that memorable triumph above mentioned. "And thus it is, but not without repeated and accurate examination of all religions, that I have attained to the discovery of these five articles, and in which I reckon myself not less happy than was Archimedes in his great discovery." But one might possibly ask, how it could cost our author so much labour and pains to find out this religion, and sever the articles belonging to it from others, with which they were innixed, when every illiterate man must be supposed able to do this? However, if our author is not belied by common fame, he repented, that he had spent his time so ill in contributing so far to the advancement of irreligion, though others contradict this, and tell us, that dying he left this advice to his children. "They talk of trusting in Christ for salvation: but I would have you to be virtuous and trust to your virtue to make you happy." Whatever there is as to this, I shall now proceed to examine our author's arguments.

CHAP. XIV.

Wherein it is inquired, whether Herbert has proved that his five articles did universally obtain.

WE have heard our author's five articles above; he pretends to make it appear, that they were every where received: we shall now inquire, whether the arguments adduced by him do evict this; and then in the next place we shall see whether it is indeed true. And, for method's sake, we shall speak of every article apart, and dissect and inspect his book, to find all that he offers, which has the least appearance of proof.

ARTICLE I.

There is one supreme God.

THAT which our author pretends to prove as to this article is, that it was generally owned, by all nations, that there is one supreme Being, and that this supreme Being, whom they owned, was the very same whom we adore. We are not now to dispute, whether this article might be known by the light of nature; nor whether some particular persons went not a great way in the acknowledgment of it. This we have before granted. But the question is whether all nations agreed in this, that there is one supreme God, and he the very same whom we adore? Let us hear our author: "Although among the ancients there was a diversity of opinion, in reference to many things connected with the Deity, whether it regarded his attributes, or the blessings which he conferred; yet that there existed one supreme God I do not think was doubted either by the wise or the unwise." And afterwards, when he thinks the first part of his article sufficiently cleared, he proceeds to the second part of it, "It remaineth that we prove the God of the Gentiles to be the same God whom we recognize." Thus we see what our author pretends. Whether he has proved this, we are now to inquire. He has not digested his arguments, nor cast them into any such mould, as might make it obvious, wherein the force of them lies, and therefore we must be at pains to scrape them together, whatever is any where, through his book, dropped, that may contribute in the least toward the strengthening of his cause; and we shall not omit any thing willingly, that has the least appearance of force.

The first observation our author insists on to this purpose is, that the Gentiles did not intend the same by the name God, that we now do. We by that name design the supreme, eternal, independent Being: whereas they intend no more than any virtue or power superior to man, on which man did any way depend. "They called every thing God, which exercised any special power over the inferior creation, and especially over man."* This he frequently inculcates, and tells us in the first page of his book, that the observation of this, was that which inclined him to think or presume the Gentiles not chargeable with that gross polytheism, with which most do, and he himself had, upon an early view of their religion, well nigh once concluded them chargeable.

If the Gentiles meant the same by the word God, which we do, no doubt they stand chargeable with the most gross, unaccountable, absurd and ridiculous polytheism imaginable: for scarce is there any thing, animate or inanimate, but by some or other became deified. "Whatever the earth, the ocean, or the heavens produced, they recognized as gods—such as the mountains, seas, rivers, and the fire." But our author is not willing to admit that they were so absurd, and to induce us to favourable sentiments, he has blessed us with this observation, that when they called those creatures animate and inanimate gods, they meant no such thing, as we do by that name. Well, if we should grant that the wiser sort, at least, or perhaps even the vulgar too, did some-

* De Religione Gentilium, p. 13.

times so understand the word, as he alleges; will that serve his purpose, and satisfy him? Nay, by no means, unless we grant him, that always they so understood the word, save when they spoke of the one true God. But this is too much to be granted, unless he prove it, especially if we are able to evince, that not a few, both wise and unwise, believed that there were more than one eternal independent being: and possibly this may be made appear afterward. A learned author, in reproach of the Grecian and Roman learning, says, "that setting aside what they learned out of Egypt, they could never by themselves determine whether there were many gods or but one."*

The next thing our author insists on to this purpose, is that different names do not always point out different gods, but different virtues of the same god. "There were as many names given to God as there were blessings in his gift; so that if there were three hundred thousand of the one, there was as many of the other." Says Seneca, lib. 5, chap. 17. quoted by our author,† and consequentially to this the same Seneca tells us,‡ "The learned by no means understood him to be the supreme God, who might be seen in the capitol, or in other temples, armed with thunder; but they rather considered him as such, who was the very soul and protector of all things—the governor of the world, who by his power framed universal nature, and who ruled over all at pleasure; and on which account a variety of divine names were ascribed to him," &c. To the same purpose speaks Servinus of all the Stoics, quoted likewise by our author. The plain English of all is, he would bear us in hand, that by those testimonies he has proved, that the Gentiles, when they attributed the name God to so many things, intended no more, but to set out so many different virtues, which all resided in the same God.

As to this we may grant, that our author has indeed proved, that different names do not always point out different gods; for he has told us that each of their gods had many different names. But this will do him no service, if we grant not that different names never point out different gods. But how shall we do this, when our author has showed us that many nations worshipped the sun, moon, and stars; and thought them gods, yea, distinct ones too, different in their natures as well as names. Each of them indeed had different names, nay, each of them had many names, titles, or eulogies heaped on them by their fond worshippers, who belike, fancied, that their gods were smitten with that same vanity, wherewith they themselves were tainted, which yet, as learned Rivet observes, had a dangerous effect upon the vulgar in process of time: for they were not so quick in their observations as our author.

Further, we know full well that some of the more wise and learned men, especially after the light of the gospel began to shine through the world, began to be ashamed of their religion, and especially the number of their gods, and to use the same shifts, to palliate the foolish and wild polytheism, which the gospel so fully exposed: and particularly Seneca, who was contemporary with Paul, and by some, upon what ground I now inquire not, is said to have conversed with him; and others o

* Wolsley's Scripture Belief, p. 110. † Herbert de Religione Gentilium, p. 13

‡ Ibid. p. 37.

the Stoics steered this course to vindicate their religion against the assaults of the Christians. But it is as true, this was a foolish attempt, and its success I cannot better express, than in the words of the learned and excellent Dr Owen, "But after they began to philosophise a little more accurately, and to receive purer notions regarding the divine nature, the wiser among them became rather ashamed of the gods, that the former ages, involved in great darkness and ignorance, had produced. Wherefore they asserted that all those rites which had formerly been vulgarly celebrated in reference to their fictitious gods, were only emblematical of things in nature in the ancient mythology. This species of theology they called *Mυθικη*, or fabulons, which they represent as a doctrine allegorical of nature."* Any one that would desire to see the folly of this observation exposed, on which our author lays so much stress, may peruse that chapter whence these words are quoted.† Nor is this more than what Velleius speaks of Zeno a Stoic and others.

But were this true, which those quotations pretend, it will not yet come up to our author's purpose, for these quotations tell us not that all the world were of this mind, but only the wise men: and I fear that this too needs a restriction. Now this comes not near to the point. When our author has occasion to notice some absurd practices or opinions that cross him, he rejects them with this: "What was done superstitiously only by a few, cannot safely be asserted of the real character of religion: and we ought not to place to its account other things, than the majority among the heathens were accustomed to do."‡ Now let this be, as it is, the state of the question, and what some of the wiser did, is nothing at all to the purpose; and this indeed is the point. In fine, we doubt not before we have done, from our author's own book, to demonstrate that what he aims at in this observation, and consequently all the story of the mystic theology of the heathens, is utterly inconsistent with all faith of history, which makes us as sure of this, as they can of any thing, that many nations, nay most nations, nay most wise men, held a plurality of gods, even in the sense our author would deny. The next observation he makes, is of kin to the former. He, following Vossius, as he tells us, divides all the Gentiles' worship into proper, symbolical, and mixed.§ Proper is, when the true God, or the sun, or the moon is worshipped as the true God, and the worship is designed ultimately to terminate in their honour: Symbolic is, when the true God is worshipped in the sun, as an image, representation, or symbol of him; then the worship is not designed only, nor mainly to terminate on the sun, but on the true God. As for the mixed, we are not concerned to speak of it. He would every where bear us in hand, that their worship was symbolical, and as such he frequently seems to justify, and avouch it as reasonable, which the papists will readily thank him for; and he expressly asserts this, that all "their worship, save what was directly addressed to the true God," which I believe was very little, was symbolic. "And it appears that there was not formerly any actual worship save of the supreme God."|| It is well that he expresses this position modestly, as being conscious how great ground others will see to judge otherwise. And the reason

* Referente Owen, Theolog. p. 196. † Upi supra, lib. 3. cap. 6.
 ‡ De Rel. Gent. p. 12. § Ibid. p. 183. || Ibid. p. 183.

that follows, drawn from the alleged evidence of the thing, we shall have under consideration anon. But toward the close of his book, he calls them ignorants, or *scioli*, that believe not as he believes in this matter.*

But it would be expected, that when he advances such a bold position, and is so hard on them that dissent from him, he would give good proof of it; but if any expect that, he will find himself deceived. I find indeed a passage quoted with a high commendation to this purpose. "And here I cannot withhold a remarkable passage in the thirty-eighth dissertation of Maximus Tyrinus, adduced by Vossius in reference to the symbolical worship of God. All the heathens believed that there was a God, although they differed widely as to what they appointed as emblematical of him."† But what is all this to the purpose? Doth this quotation from a Platonic philosopher, who had lived a hundred and fifty years after Christ, when the gospel overspread the whole world, and chased the pagan darkness away, and made them ashamed of their old opinions, and improven reason, prove any thing; to spend time on this, after what has been said above, were to trifle with a witness. The deists have not, nor can they ever prove the truth of this bold assertion; the falsehood of which we may detect before we have done. But hitherto our author has only used his shield; we must next see whether his sword be not of better metal. All that has been hitherto said, is only a defensative for the heathens' opinions and practice: we must now see by what arguments he proves that this first article did universally obtain.

His first argument leans upon a few quotations from some heathens, who assert, that there is one supreme being, such as Hierocles, Zoroaster, and others, some of old, and some of late. But all this is nothing to the purpose: for were there twenty times more, who said so, this will not prove the point he is obliged to make good. He has undertaken to show that it was not doubted among wise or unwise, "that there was one supreme God, and he the same whom we adore." Now what is this to the purpose, to bring a few learned men, telling not what were the opinions of the nations or times where they lived, or of the world, but what their own private opinions were? It is not the question what Seneca, Zoroaster, Plato, and twenty more thought, nay, what whole nations besides thought, but what the whole world thought in this matter? This the argument touches not.

His next argument is drawn from the confession of several divines. With this he begins his fifteenth chapter, and frequently speaks of it. But this says no more for him than more, and perhaps more considerable testimonies do against him. Besides, since he has not condescended on the persons who fall in with him here, nor their words, we must leave them, and tell we are not concerned in them, nor obliged to follow them further, than they do the truth.

But that which he lays the most stress on, is the supposed evidence of the thing. This he frequently insists on, as to all his articles, and its force amounts to this. "It is so clear that there is *one only supreme Being*, and that the sun nor no other is he, that it could not escape the most dull and unthinking."‡ But here our author puts me in mind of

* De Rel. Gent. p. 226. † Ibid. p. 70. ‡ Ibid. p. 182, 166.

the companions of Christopher Columbus, who first discovered America, about the year 1592, they were one day at table with him, and began to depreciate and undervalue the discovery he had made, telling him how easily others might have done it. Well, says he, I hold you a wager, I do what none of you shall do, and presently calling for an egg, says he, none of you can make that egg stand straight on the table; which when they had essayed to no purpose, he takes it, and crushes the end of it a little, and then it stood easily: which when they all said, it was easy to do: well, says he, it is very true, ye can do it after I have done it.* It is easy to see things after they are discovered to our hand, which we would otherwise never have thought of. All the world was not so discerning as our author was, and his followers pretended to be, and he has given us sufficient proof of that in his book, and I truly wonder with what face any man could make use of this argument after he had read, much more after he had written, such a book, wherein it is made clear as the sun, that many nations believed no other God but the sun, moon, and stars, as we shall show afterwards. And I must take freedom to say, that our noble and learned author, with the rest of the deists, and all the philosophers, who lived since the gospel obtained in the world, owe more to the Christian religion, than they have the ingenuity to own. What they think so clear, when revelation has not only taught them the truths, but the grounds of them, was dark not only to the vulgar, but the wisest of old. I cannot better conclude this, than by transcribing a passage of the ingenious Mr Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, "had you or I," says he, speaking about innate ideas, "been born at the bay of Seldania, possibly our thoughts and notions had not exceeded those brutish ones of the Hottentots that inhabit there; and had the Virginian king Apochancana been educated in England, he had, perhaps, been as knowing a divine, and as good a mathematician as any in it. The difference between him and a more improved Englishman, lying barely in this, that the exercise of his faculties was bounded within the ways, and modes, and notions of his own country, and was never directed to any other or farther inquiries: and if he had not any idea of a God as we have, it was only because he pursued not those thoughts, that would certainly have led him to it." Thus far he. If some men had been born where the gospel light has not come, they would have learned to talk more soberly of the sufficiency of the light of nature.

The only thing that remains as to this first article is, to prove, that this one supreme God, whom he thinks he has proved, that the Gentiles all centred in was the same God "with him whom we worship;" for this he refers us to three scriptures. Rom. i. 19. Acts x. throughout. And Acts xvii. 28, &c.

Our author has not drawn any argument from those passages, but barely refers to them. He was particularly unlucky in quoting the last of them: for it obliged him to take notice of an argument arising obviously from the passage against the purpose he adduced it for the proof of; and indeed that passage affords several arguments against our author's opinion in this matter, which are not easily to be solved, if they who follow him, were to be determined by scripture arguments.

* Hornbeck de Conversione Indorum, p. 7.

But our noble author has scarce fairly laid the objection, which he started to himself from the altar to the unknown God. But to speak home to the purpose, there are only two things that can be drawn from these passages, or the like, (1) That some of the Gentiles knew the true God. (2) That all of them had some notions of truth concerning God, or which were only rightly applicable to the true God. The actions of conscience within, and the works of God without them, enforced on them the impression of some power, superior to themselves, on which they depended; and this was indeed a notion of truth concerning God; for this was only justly applicable to the true God: but yet they, through their darkness and wickedness, when they came to inquire more particularly after the true God, applied these notions to creatures, and took them for this true God. Now this is indeed all, besides bare and repeated assertions, that I can find in our author, to prove that his first article obtained universally: and how far it is from proving this is evident from what has been said.

ARTICLE II.

This one supreme God is to be worshipped.

THE second articles our author has not attempted a sufficient, nay nor any separate proof of: wherefore we go on to the next.

ARTICLE III.

That virtue and piety are the principal parts of the worship of this one true God.

THIS he also pretends to have universally obtained, and that the Gentiles expected not heaven for their worship, or their sacred performances, but for their moral worship, that is their virtues. To prove this, is the design of our author's 15th chapter, at least till p. 195. The first thing he insists on this purpose is, the high respect which the heathens put on those things, while they listed the understanding, reason, piety, faith, modesty, hope, and felicity, amongst the number of their gods, and erected temples to them. This he proves at large. But what all this makes to his purpose I am not yet satisfied.

This indeed proves that they had a respect to all those things. Very true, so they had, and that because of their usefulness in human society. Yea this proves that they had an undue respect to them, so as to perform acts of worship to them. But that they designed to worship God by those virtues, which they would not allow they had from him, as we shall hear afterward, is not so easily proven. Besides, this was only at Rome that these altars were erected, and is so far from concluding as to the rest of the world, where virtue, hope, &c. had no such temples.

The next thing our author mentions for proof of the universal reception of this article, is the "custom of the heathens in deifying their

heroes on account of their virtues and piety." But our author knew too much of the Gentiles' religion to believe that this proves any more, than the fulsome flattery of the blinded world that deified even devils, and, as our author elsewhere well observes, men that were no better than devils; or if there was any more in this custom, when at first invented, it was only some ill applied piece of gratitude to persons, who had been their benefactors, or the benefactors of mankind. And all this respect, that was put on them, was not because their virtues reflected any glory on God, but because they had been useful to men. Besides, religion was old in the world before this novel Grecian invention took place. Nor did this universally obtain. So that the argument concludes just nothing. It neither proves that all the world were agreed that virtue and piety are the principal parts of the worship of God, nor that on account of these, men get eternal happiness. What their immortality was, of which they talked, we may see under the fifth article.

Some few quotations from Cicero, Seneca, Plato, and one or two more, compose our author's last argument. Seneca, speaking somewhere of Scipio Africanus, says, I am fully persuaded that his soul returned to heaven whence it came, and I say not so, because he was the conductor of mighty armies, for the furious Cambyses also led forth such, but on account of his illustrious moderation and piety. Piety and holiness secure the favour of the gods, nor is there any other kind of piety towards them, except what consists in the act of entertaining a good opinion of their divinity and dispositions, as it is not to be thought that any thing will be decreed by them for man that is unjust.* Some others he adduces from Plato and others, wherein they say that happiness and likeness to God are obtained by virtue.

But to what purpose are all these brought? (1) There is word here of gods, and their worship and piety as respecting them; but not one word of the, "one true God, of whom alone we speak." (2) It is certain that this piety and sanctity, according to those authors, comprehended the worship of their gods, as our author expressly confesses, "And unto virtue in its perfection, they say that many other things had to be added, but especially those things which were to the gods the evidence of a grateful mind, such as rites, ceremonies, sacrifices, and things of this kind, of which there was a great medley; but that an entrance into heaven, was not granted unto any, save to those who had brought their dispositions into regular subjection."† This last part is only our author's say, and is not reconcilable with what he tells us of their deifying some who were so far from being gods, that they were, says he, "not even good men."‡ (3) As for what Cicero says, "That for virtue and piety we are advanced to heaven;" I do not know well how to reconcile it with what he says elsewhere in his book *De Amicitia*, "virtue obviously seek for honour; nor has virtue any other reward," otherwise than by thinking that by heaven, his *caelum*, he meant that which many of them meant by their immortality, that is, an immortal fame, a good reputation, after they are gone amongst the survivors. As for Seneca, Christianity had taught him a little more, and his testimony is not much to be regarded. (4) Were there twenty more of them, they never

* *De Religione Gentilium*, p. 187.

† *Ibid*, p. 185.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 195.

come near to a proof of the point ; it is the sentiments of the world that we are inquiring after, and not what were the thoughts of some of the more improved philosophers. The question is not whether men by the light of nature saw an excellency in virtue, and that it was to be followed ; but whether they looked on it as a part, a principal part or the worship, not of their deities, but one of the “one true God:” and that for which heaven, not that imaginary heaven, which men had at their disposal ; but an “eternity of happiness in communion with God” is to be obtained ? Now our author advances nothing to prove this point.

ARTICLE IV.

We must repent when we do amiss.

As to this article our author confesses several things, which it will be meet to notice in the entry. (1) He owns that the ancients,* the wiser sort of them, thought not repentance a sufficient atonement for the grosser sort of sins ; and quotes Cicero, † “in men there is nothing to atone for guilt.” Where God was offended, they sought sanctuary in repentance, and thought it sufficient, but not where men were wronged. “But they believed that penitence or grief for sin was enough for the remedy of transgression, where the majesty of God was offended, but they did not regard such measures enough to appease man when he was offended.” ‡ (2) He confesses that they thought not “repentance alone a sufficient atonement.” He tells us that they had “expiations, and purifications ; without which they did not consider themselves freed from the punishment of sin.” § Again, (3) he confesses that the word repentance or penitence was rarely used among the ancients, in that sense we use it. “Nor do I doubt but that the Gentiles repented of their sins, although the term repentance is a word not found with them in the same sense in which it is now commonly used by authors.” ¶ Since then he makes all these concessions, there remains no more save this, that he pretends all the “world were agreed upon repentance, as that which was of use to expiate, at least, some lesser faults committed against God, and that we should, when we sin, be grieved for it.

To prove this he quotes some passages from Ovid, Seneca, and some others. The only considerable testimony is from Periander, who was one of the seven wise men of Greece : One of whose sentences, he says it was, *Ἀμαρτιῶν μεταβολέου*, “Let it repent thee of thy sins.” Seneca says, “He is nigh being innocent who repents that he has transgressed.”

But all these are alleged to no purpose. They do not prove that repentance was looked on as an expiation by the Gentiles. Ovid and Seneca lived too late in the world, and had too great access to learn from others, to be much regarded in this matter, but they only speak their own mind, and we have here no argument of the agreement of the world as to any thing about repentance. The opinions of the wise are no just measure of the knowledge or apprehensions of the vulgar.

* De Religione Gentilium, p. 191.

† Cicero de Legibus, lib. 1.

‡ De Religione

Gentilium, p. 198. § Ibid, p. 195. ¶ Ibid, p. 198.

But that whereon our author seems to lay more stress, is their sacrifices, which he pretends are an evidence of their grief for sin or repentance. "For whence, but because they were moved by real inward grief for sin, could they have thought of propitiating the gods by so many rites and sacrifices?" But, 1. If the Gentiles had been as much agreed about repentance, as our author pretends, they would indeed have spared all this pains and cost. 2. They were indeed grieved, but this grief they did not willingly entertain, nor allow themselves in as their duty; but looked on it as their torment, and sought sanctuary in means proper for appeasing their gods, as they thought. 3. This grief, which sacrifices prove them to have had, is no more, but that uneasy sense of sin in the conscience, which is a part of its punishment, and no duty performed for their deliverance; and this forced them upon all ways that they could imagine to get rid of it, so that sacrifices were what they betook themselves to, to save themselves or procure a deliverance from our author's penitence. 4. Further, our author, when it is for his purpose, can put another construction on their sacrifices; while, as we have heard above, he makes them only absurd enough testimonies of gratitude to the gods, and to have no respect to sin at all. It is indeed true, that sometimes they were in this way used; so Pythagoras is said to have used them when he offered Hecatombes to the gods, for a proposition which he found out; but for ordinary they were designed as expiatory. 5. Do their sacrifices, which they offered to so many gods, prove that they were troubled for offending the one true God? I believe not. Ay, but this was what our author should have proved. 6. Does our author tell us that they were so little agreed about this purgative, that no less a person than Plato discarded repentance,* and put philosophy in its room, as that whereby only we could be purged. And this leads me to a 7. Thing, that shows of how little signification this pretended proof is, that it is known that the more discerning philosophers made most light of these sacrifices, yea of sin, and consequently of our author's catholic remedy, repentance. As to the sufficiency of repentance, for the place he assigns it, we have spoken to it above. Our author, I think, has badly proven that it universally obtained. And indeed had there been as much weight laid on it, as is pretended, we could not have missed a more large account of it in the writings of the Gentiles. Further, 8. Our author pretends, that repentance is of no avail, as to the grosser evils, but only washes away lesser sins, and we fear our author would find some difficulty to prove that generally the Gentiles were so concerned for lesser sins, as he pretends. 9. Had this been so well agreed, as he pretends, about repentance, and had this been the design of their sacrifices, I do not well understand why our author should make such opposition betwixt sacrifices and repentance, as elsewhere he does; for his language elsewhere clearly intimates † that the people came at length, if not of their own accord, yet by the persuasion of priests, to overlook repentance, and reject it, substituting other things in its room; and when once this obtained in one generation, it is like it might spread and obtain in after ages, being transmitted from father to son, and the priests carrying on the cheat; and so, at least, the world, in all ages, hath not made any account of

* Herbert de Rel. Gent. p. 196. † Ibid. p. 10.

repentance, as the only expiation. Again, it would seem from our author, that sacrifices did not import, and were not evidences of repentance; but, on the contrary, means invented to make people neglect it. I do not well understand how they, who, if we may believe our author, were all so fully agreed about repentance, and were so prone and inclined to it, that their minds run into it without any persuasion, should need so much the priest's persuasion, and be easily drawn off from that which they accounted so available. Our author tells us, that the people's sacrifices were an argument of their repentance, as we heard above, and that the priests persuaded them to it, and that they were all agreed that repentance was the only atonement, and that the mind of man needs no admonisher to persuade it to repentance; and yet he tells us likewise in the passages adduced, that repentance was quite laid by, sacrifices and rites put in its place, the people so ignorant of the worth of it, as to let it go, and so backward as not to look after it, unless the priests had pressed it more (and yet we are told they inculcate it oft) and, in fine, the priests so negligent, that they quite neglected their duty. How to knit all this together I know not. I do think it were easier to make these words overthrow our author's argument, than to reconcile them with themselves, with truth, reason, or experience; but I spare reflections that offer themselves. Before our author or the deists make any thing of this argument, they must prove, "that sacrifices universally obtained, that sacrifices were every where offered to the one true God, that those sacrifices were symbolical of repentance," as another deist has it, and several other things taken notice of above.

ARTICLE V.

That there are rewards and punishments after this life.

WE are now come to our author's last article. He is not very constant in expressing himself about this article, and how far it was agreed to. Sometimes he pretends, that these rewards were eternal happiness, and that this was agreed; sometimes only it was agreed, that there were rewards and punishments after this life; and sometimes he words it yet more modestly, that they expected rewards and punishments, either in this life or after it.

And indeed when he comes to tell us, how far is determinable in this matter by the light of nature, he makes this article of very little signification. "The ancients skilfully affirmed that good remained for the good, and evil for the wicked, in another world. But who will show the place of the reward or punishment? Who hath conjectured what the nature of the punishment is?" And the same is perfectly the case as to rewards, though our author waves that, for what cause it is not hard to conjecture.

All that he pretends to have been received, was barely this, that there are rewards and punishments after this life.* But he tells us, that by the additions they made to this, and proceeding to determine

* Herbert d. Rel. Gent. p. 210.

further than they knew, even this came to be called in question ; (which by the way, ruins our author's cause as to this article) but let himself speak. " Whilst the philosophers added this—the priest that—and the poets those other things upon the subject ; the whole fabric, divested of truth, tottered to its fall."*

He asserts very little, we see, to have universally obtained as to this article, and he seems to do some more than insinuate, that even, as to this little, at least, in process of time there were some, and even not a few dissenters ; for I know not what meaning else to put upon the whole fabric of truth nodding, and inclining to fall. And this is to quit the cause. We shall however notice his arguments, but the more shortly because of what has been already observed.

First then he pretends, that the persuasion of this is innate, that the reasons of it are so obvious, and the arguments leading to it are so evident, that they could not but agree as to this.† But I have already shown, that every thing that is evident, or was so to our author and his companions and followers, was not so to the ancient sages. I guess that he learned most of these arguments he insists on from some others than the heathen philosophers, or if they managed them so well, he would have done right to have pointed us to the places where they have done so. But when he has done, this will not prove a *universal consent* : for we are concerned in some others besides philosophers. As for what he pretends of this persuasion being *innate*, I think he has said much to disprove it himself : or if it be, I think the presages of future misery in the mind of man, have been much more strong than of happiness. And in a word, he only says it was innate, but does not prove it. Yea, if this did not universally obtain, according to our author's own doctrine, it was not innate

Next he insists on the custom of deifying heroes, and placing them among the number of the immortal gods. This he hints at frequently. But this did not universally obtain as to time or place, and so hit not the point in the least. All were not so dignified, nay, not all that were good ; nor does it prove, that even all that people, among whom this custom prevailed, were of that opinion ; but only the persons principally concerned. And indeed it were easy to show that they were not all of this opinion, which may possibly be made appear in the next chapter. His next argument is deduced from a few testimonies of poets and philosophers asserting a future state, which he has scattered up and down, here and there. But what is this to all the world ? Do the poet's fancies of Elysian Fields, Styx and the like, give us the true measure of the sentiments of the world ?

Thus I have viewed our author's proofs of his *five articles*, and their reception in the world. I have not knowingly omitted any thing of moment, advanced by him for his opinion. I shall conclude this chapter with a few general reflections on our author's conduct in this affair.

I do not a little suspect a writer of controversy, when he huddles up, and endeavours to conceal the state of the question, and shifts it upon occasion. It is always a sign either that his judgment is naught, or that his designs are not fair and good. I do not believe that our noble author's abilities required any such mean shifts, if the badness of the

* Herbert de Rel. Gent. p. 210, 211. † P. 4.

cause he unhappily undertook had not obliged him ; but that this is the course he steers, is evident. Now he seems to undertake to show us, what the most universal apprehensions of men were in matters of religion ; and then he pretends to tell us what the more discerning persons among the heathens thought ; and thus shifts the scene, as it is for his purpose.

It is further remarkable, that our author has crammed in a great deal of philosophical learning, which makes nothing at all to the main purpose of the book. He has written a book of 230 pages to prove that these five articles obtained : whereas all the arguments he adduces, scarce take up ten of them. The rest is a collection of historical and philological learning about the heathen gods and worship. He only drops here and there the shadow of an argument ; and then when we are some pages by it, he tells us he has demonstrated this already, and we are referred back to some of the preceding arguments ; and that is, we are bid seek a needle amongst a heap of hay.* This looks exceedingly suspicious like.

Again, I do not like frequent and repeated assertions in a disputant without arguments. Fewer assertions and more arguments, if the cause had permitted, would have done better. It is said, that some by telling a lie oft over, come at length to believe it to be true. I am apt to think that the oft asserting over and over again what he undertakes to prove, might go further toward his own conviction, than all the arguments that he has advanced.

Our author undertakes to give us an account what the heathens' thoughts as to those articles were, and what led them to these apprehensions ; but after all, you shall find nothing but an account of some of their practices with our author's glosses put on them, and the reason that not they, but he thinks may be alleged in justification of their practices and opinions. If he had dealt fairly, he would have told us in their own words, what their sentiments were, and likewise what were the inducements that led them into those opinions ; but to obtrude, as every where he doth, his conjectures and strained interpretations, as their meaning, is perfectly intolerable.

It is indeed true, that our author affords us several quotations from the heathens ; but, doth he, by this means, give us a fair representation of the point in controversy, and their sentiments about it ? No. If his reader is so simple as to take this for granted, he deceives himself. I know it is the custom of some others, as well as our author, though perhaps on better designs, to quote some passages from heathen authors, in order to show their agreement with Christianity, and show what a length the mere light of nature brought them ; but hereby they do deceive the reader : so Cicero's testimony to the immortality of the soul, is alleged by our author, p. 192. "As therefore, no other God, and no other virtue was formerly recognized by the Gentiles than by us, so with both there is the same hope of immortality. Cicero expressly says that the souls of men are immortal, and that death is not to be grieved since followed by immortality." Now if any body should think that this testimony of Cicero gives a full account of his apprehensions about immortality, they would be very far deceived : for in his first

* Read the Conclusion of our Author's 8th cap. p. 54, and compare it with this cap.

book of Tusculan Questions, where he discusses this point professedly, he discovers indeed an inclination to believe it, and a desire that it may be true; yet such a hesitation about it, that he knows not how to persuade himself of it, as we shall show perhaps in the next chapter. In like manner Plato is cited by him, and many others, to the same purpose: but what a sad uncertainty both Socrates and Plato were in about this point, I shall fully demonstrate in the next chapter. I shall here set down only one notable instance of the unfairness of this way of procedure. Our author quotes Solon's testimony for future felicity, p. 192. Let us hear our author's own words. "Herodotus Lib. I. takes from Solon a nice distinction between the fortunate and the happy, where replying to Cræsus he says, no one can be called happy before his death."

Now here we have a proof to the full, of our author's conduct in his quotations, and the improvement of them. Was not Solon clear that there was a state of happiness after this life? Who can doubt it, after our author has thus proved it? But what if Solon for all this, confined happiness to this life, defining "the happy man, one who is completely furnished with outward things, acts honestly, and lives temperately;" which definition no less a person than Aristotle approved. And in all Solon's speech to Cræsus, there is not one word, if it were not disingenuously or ignorantly quoted, that gives us the least ground to believe that Solon once so much as dreamed of happiness after this life. Stanley in his *Life of Solon** recites from Herodotus this whole speech, and the story to which it relates. Cræsus king of Lydia in Asia the less, sends for Solon upon the fame of his wisdom: Solon comes: the vain king, dazzled with the lustre of his greatness, asked the wise Solon, whether ever he saw any man happier than himself, who was possessed of so great riches and power: Solon named severals, particularly Tellus the Athenian citizen, Cleobis and Biton, two brothers, the story of whom he relates to Cræsus, and gives the reasons why he looked on them as happy, without ever a hint of their enjoying any happiness after this life. At which Cræsus was angry, thinking himself undervalued, whereupon Solon thus addresses him. "Do you inquire, Cræsus, concerning human affairs of me, who know, that divine Providence is severe, and full of alteration? In process of time, we see many things we would not; we suffer many things we would not: let us propose seventy years, as the term of man's life, which years consist of 25,200 days, besides the additional month, if we make one year longer than another by that month, to make the time accord, the additional months belonging to those years will be thirty five and the days 1050, whereof one is not in all things like another: so that every man, O Cræsus, is miserable? You appear to me very rich, and are king over many; but the question you demand I cannot resolve, until I hear you have ended your days happily; he that has much wealth is not happier than he who gets living from day to day, unless fortune continuing all those good things to him, grant that he dies well. There are many men very rich, yet unfortunate, many of moderate estates, fortunate; of whom he who abounds in wealth, and is not happy, exceeds the fortunate only in two things; the other, him, in many; the rich is more able to satisfy his

* Stanley's *Life of Solon*, p. 28, 29.

desires and to overcome great injuries ; yet the fortunate excels him, he cannot indeed inflict hurt on others, and satisfy his own desires ; his good fortune debars him of those. But he is free from evils, healthful, happy in his children, and beautiful ; if to this, a man dies well, that is, he whom you seek, who deserves to be called happy ; before death he cannot be styled happy, but fortunate ; yet for one man to obtain all this is impossible, as one country cannot furnish itself with all things : some it hath, others it wants ; that which hath most, is best, so in man, not one is perfect, what one hath, the other wants : he who hath constantly most, and, at last, quietly departs this life, in my opinion, O king, deserves to bear that name. In every thing we must have regard to the end, whither it tends ; for many to whom God dispenseth all good fortunes, he at last utterly subverts." Thus we see the whole passage, in which it is evident that Solon meant only, that to make a man happy, it is requisite he continues in the enjoyment of a competency till death, and that then he dies well, that is, quietly and in good respect, or credit with men. That this is the meaning of dying well according to Solon, is not only evident from the strain of the discourse, but from the stories of Tellus, Cleobis, and Bito, whom he instances as happy men, because of their creditable deaths. The first he tells us died in the defence of his country ; after he had put his enemies to flight, he died nobly, and the Athenians buried him in the place, where he fell, with much honour. The two brothers Cleobis, and Bito, drew their mother's chariot forty five stadia, and with the stress died next morning in the temple, and so died honourably. And any one that will give himself the trouble to read Ovid's story of Acteon, in his third book of his *Metamorph.* will see it clear as the day, that he meant just the same. He represents how happy one might have thought Cadmus, considering how many things he had that were desirable in his lot, a kingdom, relations and children, had not Acteon his grand child's fate interrupted the series of his joys, and made him miserable : whereupon the poet concludes, "till death a man cannot be called happy," that is, till a man has, without interruption, enjoyed a tract of prosperity, and dies creditably, without any mixture of ill fortune.

Thus we see with what candour our author quotes the heathens. Here he has first broke off some words from their context, whereby the unwary reader is tempted to believe, that the speaker meant quite another thing, than really he did ; and then obtrudes this false sense of one or two men's words, who were wise men, and in their thoughts far above the vulgar, as the harmonious meaning of the Gentile world. Nor do I think strange that our author could serve us so, seeing he was prepossessed in favour of the heathens' religion before he began to read their books. For he tells us in the entry of his book, the very first sentence of it, and more fully in the rest of the first chapter, that he was once very concerned for the divine providence, and withal fully convinced that it could not be maintained without there were a religion common to all men ; or as his words formerly quoted by us, express it, "unless every man was provided with the means that were needful for attaining future happiness," so he went to the books of the heathen under a persuasion that there was a common religion there, could he be so lucky as to light on it, and therefore no doubt he drew and strained things to his purpose, both rites and words. Thus he begins

his discourse about expiation; "I am now to that of some rites of the Gentiles, which can easily be drawn into a sounder sense &c."* And indeed he draws them to a sounder sense, than ever they put on them. But after all, "forced prayers are not good for the soul," says the Scots proverb. And from one thus prepossessed, we can expect no fair account of the sentiments of the Gentiles.

Which, by the way, gives me occasion to remark, that, if any one desires to understand the mind of the heathen philosophers and sages they would read them themselves, or heathen accounts of their lives and actions, rather than those done by Christians; because very oft when Christians write their lives, they have some design, and they strain every thing in the philosophers to a compliance either with their designs or apprehensions. The heathen writers, being again under no influence from the scripture light, do plainly narrate things as they are, not being so sensible of what things may reflect really upon the persons concerning whom they write, the light of nature not representing clearly that wickedness which is in many of their actions and opinions, and scruple not to tell them out plainly; whereas, Christians being aware how odious such and such practices or principles are, unwilling to tell such things of those famous men, as they were really guilty of; because they know how deep a stain it will leave on them, by those who are taught the evil of them by the scriptures.

I shall add this reflection more; If any one would conclude from our author's confidence, in some places of his book, where he talks of many reasons that he has advanced, and that he has demonstrated this and that; if, I say, from this they would infer, that he was fully persuaded in his own mind, about these five articles, that they universally obtained and are sufficient, he would very far mistake our author, who, throughout his book, sufficiently betrays his uncertainty about them, and that he wanted not a fear, lest it should not be true, as some things afterwards to be pleaded, will show. But lest this should seem to be said altogether without ground, I shall single out one instance of our author's wavering in this matter, reserving others to another occasion. It is p. 19. where after our author has discoursed of the more famous names of the true God, and showed that the Gentiles applied them all, save one, to the sun, he concludes thus: "These were the more common names of the supreme Being as found among the Hebrews; and which were also attributed to the Sun by the Gentiles, as we are allowed to conjecture from what has been already advanced. So that although the Hebrews by such appellations recognized a Being superior to the Sun, yet the Gentiles had no reference to any other divinity than the Sun, except you suppose that the Great God was worshipped in the Sun, as exhibiting a striking representation, or as Plato calls it, a sensible image of God; which I cannot well deny, since almost all the religion of the ancients was symbolical."† But perhaps, though our author was not well confirmed in his opinion, when he began his book, yet he came to some more fixedness before he got to the end of it. Well, let us hear him, in his censure of the Gentiles' religion in the last chapter of his book; where speaking of the worshipping of the heavens, the

* P. 195. † Herbert. p. 223.

sun, &c. he gives his judgment thus, "Concerning this opinion I think as of the other, namely, that except their worship was symbolical it was altogether wrong in its character; but that their worship was really such there are many reasons to establish besides those already given. Still, the reader must be permitted to judge in this for himself." What more uncertainty could any betray, than in those words our author doth? And indeed here we have enough to overthrow his whole book: for if this first article fall, all will fall with it, as we may see afterwards.

But it is now time that we draw to a conclusion of this chapter, having sufficiently enervated our author's arguments, so far as we could discern them. If any of them seem to be omitted; I presume they will be found to be of no great consideration, and of an easy despatch to any that is acquainted with this controversy. Our author's way of writing made it somewhat difficult to find his arguments. And indeed upon serious reflection, I can scarce understand at what our author aimed in this way of writing. He could never rationally expect that this would clear the subject he had undertaken. I had almost concluded that his design behoved to be an ostentation of knowledge of the heathens' religion in order to make his authority have the more weight, and to dare people from entertaining a different opinion concerning the religion of the heathen world, from that which one who had so industriously searched into their writings, owned. But if this was it, our author has missed it. And I think instead of doing the deists' cause any service this way, he has rather hurt it: for every one that shall peruse this work with attention, and find how great our author's learning, diligence, and industry have been, and yet how little he has been able to do, they will infer the weakness of the cause he has undertaken, and conclude that the cause could bear no better defence, and that therefore a weak and indefensible cause has baffled our author's great abilities, and application. C. Blount and they who have come after our author, as has been said, do but copy after him, and take his notions upon trust, but others will be somewhat more wise, and will look whom they trust in a matter of this importance.

CHAP XV.

Wherein it is made appear that Herbert's five articles did not universally obtain.

WE have in the preceding chapter sufficiently showed how weak our noble author's proofs are of his universal religion. It now remains that we prove that what he pretends is indeed false. Our work here is far more easy, than what our author undertook. He asserts that providence cannot be maintained, unless all mankind are provided in the means needful for attaining future happiness, and he is likewise clear, that less cannot be allowed sufficient for this end, than the five articles mentioned, wherefore he pretends that all the world agreed in owning those. Now to have made this last appear, it was needful it should be proven by induction of all particular nations, that they thus

agreed and that as to all times ; but this would have been somewhat too laborious. We maintain that all did not agree in the acknowledgment of those five articles : and this is evinced, if we can show any one nation dissenting from any one of them. But we shall not be so nice upon the point, as only to mention one nation, or disprove one article. Let us take a separate view of each article, and see what the judgment of some nations was concerning them.

ARTICLE I.

All the world did not agree in owning the one true supreme God.

I MIGHT for proof of this only desire any person to read our author's book, and there he would find this sufficiently clear. But I shall shortly confirm it to the conviction of any, who has not a mind to shut his eyes, by the few following observations as to the world's sentiments in this case.

I. It is most evident to any one, who will give himself the trouble to read never so little of the writings of the Gentiles, that many nations, I had almost said most nations, did hold a plurality of eternal and independent beings, on whom they depended, and which they called gods in the proper sense of the word. Herodotus, quoted by our author, tells, that all the Africans "worship the sun and moon only."* And Plato, quoted likewise by our author a few pages after, in his dialogue, which he calls Cratylus, tells, "The first inhabitants of Greece seem to me to have reckoned those the only gods, whom the Barbarians were accustomed to regard as such, namely, the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars, and the heavens."† Of this also the ancient inscriptions mentioned by our author, and more particularly by Hornbeck in his treatise *De Conversione Gentilium*, is a proof, such as, "To the invincible sun,—to the omnipotent god Mythras;" Mythras being a name given to the sun by the Persians, as our author proves. And if we may believe Maimonides, the Sabeans owned no god save the stars.‡ Nor were the Egyptians of another mind. Diodorus's testimony is worth our notice to this purpose. "The first inhabitants of Egypt contemplating these ornaments of the world, and greatly admiring the constitution of nature, hence reckoned the sun and moon two gods, calling them Isis and Osiris.§ Thus we see what the apprehensions of several nations were, and how harmonious they are in dissenting from our author's assertion. It had been easy to have alleged many more testimonies even from our author against himself: but we aim at brevity.

II. It is not improbable, that some nations, though they might allow some priority of one of their gods to the rest, yet did not think that there was any such great inequality, at least, amongst their more notable deities, as could infer the supremacy of one to the rest, and their dependence on, and subordination to him. We find every where equal

* De Rel. Gent. p. 36. † p. 39. ‡ Hornbeck. p. 19. § More Nevochim referente. Hornbeck ubi supra, p. 17.

honours payed, equal or very little different titles of respect given to the sun, or moon. So that it is very likely, though they might give the sun the preference in point of order, yet they did not apprehend any such great inequality, as seems needful betwixt one supreme being and his dependants. The people of Mexico in America, though they worship many gods, yet look on their two principal ones, whom they call Vitizilophuehtli, and Tezcatlipuca, as two brothers.* And the inhabitants of Darien, St Marth and other places thereabout, own only the sun, and the moon as his wife. Further it is owned by our author several times, that many nations hold two first beings, one good, another evil, whom they called Ve Jupiter, and by the Persian Magi he was called Arimanius†. Though our author thinks a softer construction is to be put on their meaning, than to charge them with making their Ve Jupiter equal with the good God. But we know our author must not be allowed to interpret, unless he can give good grounds for his opinion about the meaning of the Gentiles, which in this case he doth not once attempt, and we know that some looked on this wicked principle as the supreme, as we shall show anon, and I think it will be hard to clear some of them, yea even no less a person than Plutarch, from making them equal and both infinite; if we may believe a late author, who tells us, "That as for Plutarch, one of the soberest of the philosophers, he was the horridest Polytheist of them all; for he asserts two supreme anti-gods; one infinitely good, and the other infinitely evil."‡ Moreover, some of the deists do not think this opinion destitute of probability,§ as we had noted above. But whatever there is as to this, yet,

III. It is certain that many of them, notwithstanding the huge number of gods they maintained, were yet utterly ignorant of the true God. This is so evident, that I cannot but wonder at our author's impudence in denying it, especially, after the testimonies we have already quoted from him. We have already shown that the Egyptians and Grecians of old owned no other God besides the sun, moon, and stars. And we have heard the same of the Sabeans, several Americans and inhabitants of Africa; and Cæsar tells us the same of the Germans; || yea, our author is forced to make a fair confession, and contradict himself in the entry of his fourth chapter, where speaking of the Gentiles and their worshipping of the sun, he delivers himself thus, "At length they thought it very inconsistent that God, who demanded homage of all, should nevertheless conceal himself from his worshippers. Therefore almost all the Gentiles resolved to constitute the sun a god; not indeed as the supreme God, but as next to him, and as exhibiting a remarkable image of him."¶ Here you see our author positive, that they put not the sun in the room of the "one true God;" none of them did it; but in the very next sentence he tells us, that they did discard the true God, and very absurdly put another in his place. And our author knows full well, that at Athens there was an altar erected to "the unknown God," and Paul expressly tells them, that this "unknown God," was the "true God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship I unto you.' What says our author to this? He directly contradicts the apostle, and then makes him a compliment that is well nigh to non-

* Hornbeck, p. 70. † De Religione Gentilium, p. 163. ‡ Nichol's Confer. p. 2. p. 57. § Oracles of Reason, p. 195. || De Pello Gallico. ¶ De Rei. Gent. p. 20.

sense. He tell us that it is hard to think, though the apostle expressly says so, that this unknown God" was the God of the Jews. But if we will not stand to our author's say, then he tells us what some scriptures he had formerly cited, prove; Acts x. *passim*, Acts xvii. 28, 29. Rom. i. 19. But we have above showed, that these are not for our author's purpose. Well, what then remains? Nothing, but only this: "I have no doubt," says he, "but they knew the true God." But our author's certainty will not satisfy another; and we just now showed that our author was not so fully sure as he pretends to be in this place. But yet our apostle, he tells, took very handsomely occasion hence to instruct the Gentiles, that is, if we believe our author, he took occasion from a false supposition to instruct them. But this is kindness that he used any compliment, though a ridiculous one. But leaving this, I go on.

IV. They among the nations, who owned "one supreme God," did frequently, if not for the most part, put some others in the room of the true God. Some made the world God. This is what Balbus the Stoic sets up for with all his might in Cicero's second book *De Nat. Deor.* throughout. "And certain it is that, than the world itself, nothing is better, nothing more excellent, nothing more beautiful."* And therefore a little after he concludes the world, God.† Cicero himself was of the same mind; for when Velleius the Epicurean had been heard and refuted by Cotta the academic: and the wild opinions of Epicurus about the gods, had been fully exposed, which is the subject of the first book; Balbus the Stoic proposes and defends the Stoics' opinion about the nature, being, number of the gods, and their providence, and defends it after the best fashion he can (where, by the way, there is not one word of the true God, but a full discovery of the grossest ignorance of him, and the greatest wickedness and folly in asserting a plurality of gods, and the parting all the excellencies of the true God among them) this makes up the second book. In the third book, Cotta the academic disputes against, and exposes the Stoics' opinions, as defended by Balbus; and Cicero was pleased with Balbus, who maintained the Stoics' sentiments. What they were we have just now noted. And whether Plato, Aristotle, yea and Socrates were not of this opinion, is not so very clear. Certain it is, that they paid a little too great respect to the world, if they were not.‡ But whatever were their sentiments, it is not of so great consequence to the question under consideration, to spend time in inquiring, since it is evident that many were of this opinion. Others thought that the heaven was God, and this is owned by Ennius the poet, quoted by our author in that noted verse so frequently mentioned by Cicero:§ And there also he tells us of an old inscription found at Rome, *Optimus maximus Colus Eternus*: Thus we see the heavens dignified with those very epithets, which our author pretends to have been peculiar to the supreme God. And he tells us, that some are of opinion, that Pythagoras inclined this way. And our author leaves it in doubt. If Aristotle and Plato were not of this mind, "That the heavens were the supreme God," as we see some others were; yet they did own heaven for God, and to be worshipped as such. "Not only did the priests decree that the heavens should receive divine honours, but likewise the more celebrated philosophers; and not

* Mihi p. 70.

† Ibid. p. 83.

‡ De Relig. Gent. p. 39.

§ p. 54.

reckoning Aristotle alone, but also his preceptor as concurring in this.* But the most prevalent opinion was, "that the sun was the one true and supreme God:" that many, and perhaps most nations thought so, the testimonies above alleged fully proved, and we have heard our author confessing it as to some. I shall only add a few remarks more to this purpose. There is a quotation of Macrobinus, which I find in our author, that is worth noticing, "The Assyrians," says Macrobinus, "who worshipped the supreme God, gave him the name of Adod, which signifies, one. Him they adored as the most powerful, but added a goddess, bearing the name of Attergatin, and to these two they attributed all power, understanding by them the sun and the earth."† And our author further acquaints us as to the Persians, "That they acknowledge two great principles, viz. Oromazen the fountain of good, and Arimanius, the fountain of evil, between whom they placed the sun as arbiter."‡ I have in the close of our former chapter, quoted a notable passage from our author to the same purpose, wherein he tells us, that all the names of the true God were ascribed to the sun. Of the same opinion were the Phenicians, Britons of old, and their famed Druids, and perhaps most nations. Yea, so deeply did this fix its roots in the minds of most, that the greatest amongst the heathen philosophers can scarce be freed from an inclination this way.§ Plato tells us, how devout Socrates was in the worship of the sun, and that several times he fell into an ecstasy while thus employed. Nor are the famous Indian philosophers one whit more wise. "Not only the Brahmins, but all the Indians, yea and the famed Apollonius (whom the heathens compared to our blessed Lord, most blasphemously and groundlessly) worshipped the sun: And we have Apollonius's prayer to the sun, recorded by Philostratus in his life, lib. 1."|| Yea, after the light of the glorious gospel had cleared the philosophers' eyes, and made them ashamed of much of their religion, yet even the Platonic philosophers could not quit the thought of the sun's being God.¶

But not only did some look on the sun as supreme God; but if we may believe Hornbeck, who was at great pains to understand the religions of the world, and particularly of America; several nations in America, particularly the inhabitants of New France, and they who inhabit about the river Sagadahoc, worship principally the devil or a malignant spirit.

Thus we have fully demonstrated what we undertook, and hereby quite spoiled the whole story of a universal religion; and our author has been so unhappy, as to lay to our hands many of the arguments, whereby we have disproved his own position. This step being once gained, we shall be more brief in the consideration of the remaining articles: for they all fall with this. If there is a mistake as to this, there can remain nothing sincere in religion. If the true God is not known, he cannot be worshipped, and rewards and punishments cannot be expected from him; nor can we be sensible of, or sorry for any offence done against him. So that we might stop here, as having ruined wholly

* De Relig. Gent. p. 19. † p. 24. ‡ p. 28. § This is fully proven by Dr Owen, Hornbeck, and others, in their books formerly referred to. See Owen's Theolog. lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 182. || Hornbeck, p. 31. ¶ Owen, ubi supra, lib. 3. cap. 5. p. 198.

that cause our author undertook to defend: but we shall consider the rest also.

ARTICLE II.

It was universally agreed, that the one true God is to be worshipped.

How could they agree as to the worshipping him, whom they did not know to exist? If it would not fright the persons concerned, I might here pertinently ask them the question, the apostle puts, Rom. x. 14. "How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?"

And further, even they who owned one supreme God, many of them entertained such notions of him, as made him unworthy of any worship. He tells us that many of them locked him up in heaven, denying his providence; and one would almost think our author had been of their opinion. But, whatever our author's thoughts were, it is well known, that this opinion prevailed very far, and obtained amongst many, if not most nations, who owned one supreme God, besides the sun. And they were further of opinion, that God had committed the whole management of the world to deputies. Our author informs us, that the ancient heathens divided their gods into supercelestial, celestial, and subcelestial.* And he tells us, that the chief God, and his companions, the supercelestial gods, have not only such concernment in, or regard to the things that are transacted in this world, as to make them take any notice of them: and that the supreme God has withdrawn himself, and the supercelestial gods from the view of mortals, as being of too sublime a nature to be known by them: and that he has deputed the sun, moon, and stars to inspect the world, as the only gods who can be enjoyed by men. And the Indian Bramins seem indeed to be of this mind, as we know the whole followers of Epicurus were. † Yea, the inhabitants of Calecut, a kingdom in the East Indies, are so absurd as to imagine that the devil is God's deputy, to whom the government of the world is committed: and hence they worship the devil principally, (as likewise do the kingdoms of Decam and Narsinga) and "their king has in his oratory the image of the devil with a crown on his head, so very frightful, that the most resolute tremble at the sight of it: the wall is all painted with lesser devils; and in each corner stands one of brass, so well done, that it seems all in flames. Now, if such notions are entertained of God, it is no wonder though he be by many thought not worth the worshipping. The consequences of those apprehensions I cannot better express, than Cicero has done in the very beginning of his first book *De Nat. Deorum*. "There are philosophers who think that the gods take no care whatever of human affairs, and if such a sentiment is correct, then what piety can possibly exist? How can there be any religion, if the gods neither will nor can assist us nor take any notice of what we do. In such a case, of what avail is it that we

* *De Rel. Gent.* 170.

† See Calecut in great Geogr. Diction.

address to them prayers and supplications, or that we pay to them any divine honours?" And much more to the same purpose. Though he speaks of a plurality of gods, yet what he says holds true as to the case in hand: for if we entertain, or if the Gentiles did entertain, as we see some of them did, such notions of their supreme God, as he here speaks of, the same consequences must follow; and it is not credible that any who thought so, could judge the supreme God worthy of worship. And indeed we find them no way concerned about it.

In fine, not a few of the wiser sort, who entertained the most just thoughts of God of any, yet being in the dark as to the way of worshipping God, have declared against any worship, at least in practice, till it should by himself be condescended on. Thus it is as to the wiser sort among the Chinese. About God and his worship they were in no way concerned. They indeed acknowledged one supreme divinity, by whom they believed that all things were preserved and governed; but because ignorant of the manner in which he wished to be worshipped, they readily declared that it was better all homage to him should be omitted, than that they should err in the mode of paying it.*" And perhaps the best philosophers in other nations were not of a different mind. Thus we see how far they were from being agreed about this article.

ARTICLE III.

The Gentile world were not agreed in judging that virtue and piety are the principal parts of the worship of God.

How it should come into our author's head to think that they were agreed, is a little strange, considering how little is to be found among their writers that looks this way. But I suppose the case was this, he had concluded that they were agreed about the being of one true God, and to make his religion complete, he behoved to have them some way agreed about his worship too. But he found them endlessly divided about their solemn worship, and none of it directed to the one true God, but all expressly aimed at other things: wherefore there was no other thing left that could be to his purpose, and therefore he finding that there was somewhat that all the world agreed in, paying some respect to, at least, in words, under the name of virtue; he would needs appropriate this to the true God for his worship, though he has no warrant from the Gentiles to do so. And truly after all, if this was the worship of the true God, or designed as such, whatever agreement there might be in opinion about the worship of the one true God, I think there was none in practice, if not in a total neglect of it: for how few were there, who can have the least pretence to challenge that name amongst all those, whose names have been transmitted to us? But to relieve this, and come to the point in hand somewhat more closely.

I. It is evident that the world was very far from being agreed, that there is one God: far more were they divided about the acknowledg-

* Hornbeck, p. 47.

ment of the true God, and whom they should own as such. It was therefore utterly impossible that they should condescend on this, as a principal part of the worship of God, whom they did not know to have any being.

II. So far were they from looking on virtue as the principal part of the worship of the gods, whom they owned, that the worship of many of their gods, was thought to consist in things that were cross to the plainest dictates of nature's light. Our author acquaints us frequently with the obscenities, the cruelties, and other extravagances of their worship. The obscenities are too fulsome to be repeated. The furious extravagances, religious or rather superstitious fury and madness used in the worship of Bacchus, are known to every one. And for their cruelty, who knows not that human sacrifices were almost universally used? Some offered captives, some offered strangers, some sacrificed their dearest relations and children, and that in the most cruel manner.*

III. We need go no further than our author's book, to learn, that most nations were so far from looking on virtue as any part of the worship due to any of those gods they owned, that they placed it wholly in such other things, as our author, amongst others, has given us a large account of.

IV. They, who were most zealous for virtue, were very far from looking on it as a part of the worship of God, or directing it to his glory. I believe our author, were he alive, for all his reading, would find it difficult to find one fair testimony to this purpose. They looked not on themselves as debtors to God for their virtue. Hence Cotta, after he has acknowledged that we are indebted to God for our riches and eternal enjoyments, adds; "No person ever attributed with justice the virtue to God's gift which he may possess. Men are praised for their virtue, and in its possession we may justly glory, and this we could not consistently do if it were given to us by God."†—Hence a little after, adds he, "for who ever gave thanks to God that he was a good man."‡ And much more to the same purpose. They thought that their virtue made them equal to their gods. "This is what philosophy promises me—that it may cause me to be equal to God."§ Yea, not only so, but they pretended their virtues placed them above their Gods.|| Hence they will not have us so much as to pray to God, either as to virtue or felicity, it is a mean thing to weary the gods, and much more to the same purpose.

ARTICLE IV.

It did not universally obtain that Repentance is a sufficient expiation; or, that we must repent for offences done against the true God.

OUR author has acknowledged, that there is rarely mention of this

* See this fully proven in the learned and excellent Dr Owen's Treatise de Justitia Vindicatrice from p. 66 to 100, by authentic testimonies, with such remarks as may be worth the reading.

† Cic de Nat. Deor. P. mihi 187. Lib. 2. ‡ Seneca, Epist. 48. § Epist. 53.

|| Epist. 73.

amongst the ancients; and we have already, by quotations from him, cleared that the ancient heathens did not think it a sufficient expiation. And indeed that it was of no great consideration among them, is sufficiently evident from their not taking any notice of it, even when the fairest occasions present themselves. And finally, there can be nothing more certain, than that their repentance could not aim at the offence done to the true God, of whom many of them were utterly ignorant. But what has been said is sufficient to show that it did not universally obtain in any sense, that can turn to any account to the deists.

ARTICLE V.

It was not universally agreed, that there are rewards and punishments after this life.

1. HOWEVER many there were that maintained the immortality of the souls of men, it is certain, that there were very many dissentients, who were of a different mind, and that of all sorts of people. The famed sects among the Indians, which they call Schaerwaecha, Pasenda, and Tschectea, if we may believe Hornbeck in his account of them, all deny a future state.* Nor are the wise Chinese, at least many of them, of a different mind. They are divided in three sects. The first sect of their philosophers are the followers of the famed Confucius; their morals are refined, as perhaps those of the most polite parts of the world, if not more. But as to the soul, they seem to make it a part of God, which at death returns to that first principle, whence it was broke off. Let us hear Possevinus's account of them; as to this matter he says, they maintain, "That the soul of man is one and the same thing with that which is the first principle of all things, and when man dies, the soul perishes altogether; while yet that first principle continues which gave life at first." And further, they maintain, "That a man may in this life attain to the perfection of knowledge regarding this first principle, and arrive by meditation to the highest state of peace and tranquillity, &c."†

These are the apprehensions of their best moralists. But there are other two sects, that plainly declare against a future state, are for the mortality of the soul, and have no prospect beyond time.‡

Of this same opinion were not one single person, but many sects of the ancient philosophers, whom Cicero mentions, and concludes his account of them thus. "By such sentiments it is evident that nothing is believed to accrue to any after death, for with life all consciousness comes to an end."§ And a little after, speaking of the opposition made to Plato's opinion about the immortality of the soul, he says, "But the greater number strenuously opposed this opinion."

Nor were they otherwise minded, many of them in Greece. When Socrates vents his opinion of the immortality of the soul, that day before he died, Cebes, one of his disciples, who is the conferrer, or one of them, at least, that maintains the discourse with him, addresses him

in those words, "Socrates, I subscribe to the truth of all you have said. There is only one thing that men look upon as incredible, viz. What you advanced of the soul; for almost every body fancies, that when the soul parts from the body, it is no more, it dies along with it; in the very minute of parting it evanishes like a vapour or smoke, which flies off and disperses, and has no existence."* Yea, Pliny, Strabo, and many others declare against the immortality of the soul; nay, Pliny on set purpose, disputes against it.† Persius and all the poets take the same view, and even made use of this as an encouragement to give way to themselves, in whatever lust prompted them to

"Indulge genio, carpamus dulcia; nostrum est
Quod vivis, cinis, et manes, et fabula fiet."

If it be said, that this is an irony, and that he was not in earnest; it were easy to multiply quotations to this purpose from Horace, Catullus, and most of the poets, which are not capable of any such construction. But I forbear.

And although Cicero was for the immortality of the soul; yet in his first book of Tusculan Questions, he plainly derides the whole business of rewards and punishments after this life; as any one, who will attentively peruse it, may see. I forbear to transcribe the passage; because I behoved to transcribe much to show the tendency of his discourse. He plainly tells us, that he could be eloquent, if he had a mind to speak against those things.‡ The case is plainly this; that person whom he discourses, looks on death as an evil. Cicero tells him, that perhaps it is because he fears those punishments after this life, which the vulgar believed, and after he has tartly ridiculed them he concludes, that had he a mind, he could enlarge against those things, and plainly expose the whole tradition.

But because some talk so much of Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and we get so many quotations from them about the immortality of the soul and a future state; I shall here represent their own opinion somewhat more fully. As for Socrates, he has not written any thing that is come to our hands. All the accounts we have of him are from Plato, Xenophon, and others, but especially Plato his scholar, who was with him at his death. From him then we shall learn at once, what both his master's opinion and his own were in this matter. When Socrates is making his apology before his judges, he tells them, "that to fear death is nothing else, but to believe one's self to be wise, when they are not; and to fancy that they know what they do not know. In effect nobody knows death; nobody can tell, but it may be the greatest benefit of mankind; and yet men are afraid of it, as if they knew certainly that it were the greatest of evils."§ And a little after, speaking of death, "why should I be afraid of the punishment adjudged by Melitus, a punishment that I cannot positively say whether it is good or evil?"|| And thus he concludes his Apology. "But now it is true we should all

* Plato's Phædon done into English from M. Dacier's trans. v. 2. p. 100.

† Owenæ Theolog. lib. I. p. 174.

‡ Tuscul. Quest. lib. I. a little from the beginning, p. mihi, 312.

§ Dacier's Plato, vol. 2. p. 28. Socrates' Apology. || Ibid. p. 40.

retire to our respective offices, you to live, and I to die. But whether you or I are going upon the better expedition, it is known to none, but God alone.”*

Again, in that famed discourse on this subject, before his death, after he has produced all the arguments he can for the immortality of the soul, he tells us pretty plainly, how things stood with him. “ Convincing the audience of what I advance, is not my only aim ; indeed I shall be infinitely glad that it come to pass ; but my chief scope is to persuade myself of the truth of these things ; for I argue thus, my dear Phedon, and you will find that this way of arguing is highly useful (very true to folk that are not certain and can do no better, and only to these.) If my propositions prove true, it is well done to believe them, and if after my death they be found false, I will reap that advantage in this life, that I have been less afflicted by the evils which commonly accompany it. But I shall not remain long under this ignorance.”† And when he is near his close, and just to take the poison, or a little before, having represented his thoughts about rewards and punishments after his life, which are little better than those of the poets ; he concludes his account in these words, “ no man of sense can pretend to assure you, that all these things are just as you have heard. But all thinking men will be positive, that the state of the soul, and the place of its abode, is absolutely such as I represent it to be, or at least, very near it, provided the soul be immortal.”

More might be alleged to the same purpose ; but this is sufficient to let us see how wavering Plato and his master Socrates were. They talk confidently sometimes ; but presently they sink again. Let us next see what Cicero’s mind was. He treats this subject, on set purpose, in his first book of Tusculan Questions, which is wholly spent on this subject. He undertakes to show and prove against the person whom he instructs, that death is not an evil, whether we are dissolved quite or not : and having, as he fancies, proven that death is not an evil, he proceeds and gives us this account of his undertaking. “ I shall teach you, speaking of death, if I can, that it is not only not evil, but good.”‡ But a little after he tells us clearly what we may expect from him, when his hearer exhorts him to go on ; says he, “ I will show you the way, and explain as far as I am able, what you desire, though my sayings on the subject must not be received as equally certain with those of the Pythian Apollo. . . . But as a weak man, following out some probable conjectures, I have it not in my power to go farther than as I am guided by the appearance of truth.”§ And speaking about this opinion, his auditor tells him, how pleasant this is to him :|| and after he has instructed his hearer, he professes his resolution to stand by this opinion ; but gets a caution from his instructor, that lets us see how things stand. “ A. No person shall move me in my opinion regarding immortality. M. Replies, I praise you for that, although one ought not to trust too much, for we are often wrought upon by an ingenious conclusion. We likewise fall from, or change our opinion in matters that are clearer, for even in these there may be some obscurity.” And if you would know what his reason was for insisting so long on the proof of this, he tells

* Dacier’s Plato, vol. 2. p. 47. Socrates Apology. † Plato’s Phedon, p. 135, 136.
 ‡ Tusc. Quest. p. 325. § Ibid. p. 326. || Ibid. p. 329.

us near the close, that it was to banish the contrary suspicion, which was troublesome. Much more might be adduced, but what has been said sufficiently demonstrates how fluctuating and uncertain the best of them were, in reference to this important point.

If any shall say, that though these great men upon some occasions, expressed themselves with some hesitation, and did insinuate some suspicion that 'the opposite part of the question might be true, yet upon other occasions they are positive; and that this is as good an evidence of their being firmly persuaded, as the other expressions are of their hesitation. I answer, the consequence is naught. A seeming positiveness upon some occasions, may be the result of the joint influence of a strong desire, that the thing should be true, and some philosophical quirk urged for its support; for as Cicero well observes in the words last quoted, "we are often wrought upon by an ingenious conclusion," and this especially holds true, where there is a strong inclination to believe the thing as being of obvious advantage to us. Now this may be, where there is no certainty or firm persuasion. I readily own that these great men favoured the immortality of the soul: but I positively deny, that they received it with that firmness of assent, that is not only due, but unavoidable to truths, which carry their own evidence along with them. And I moreover aver, that the deists, in quoting some of these assertions from them, wherein they seem positive, suppressing other expressions, wherein they discover a hesitation, do but abuse their reader's credulity, and give neither a full nor fair account of the judgment of these men.

CHAP. XVI.

Wherein some general considerations are laid down for proving that many of the best things, which are to be met with in the heathens, were not the discoveries of the light of nature, but came from tradition.

NOTWITHSTANDING the gross ignorance, which overspread the heathen world, was very great; yet it cannot be denied that there are very many surprising hints of truth to be found, in many of their writings, in reference even to matters of religion.

The deists take up whatever they meet with of this sort, and confidently give it out, "that all this they discovered by the mere light of nature." There are, who on the other hand, will scarce allow them to have made any of those discoveries by the light of nature; but ascribe whatever hints of truth are to be met with, to tradition. This is said to be the opinion of Eusebius and Scaliger by Dr Owen. And it is of late maintained by Mr Nicolls the ingenious author of the Conference with a Theist:* for which Mr Beccoufal, the author of a late treatise concerning the law of nature, is much displeas'd with him, and takes him to task. †

I design not to make myself a party in this debate. I think that

* Theol. lib. 1. cap. 8. parag. 4. Confer. part 2. page 32, 33, &c.

† Beccon. of the Law of Nature, cap. 4. p. 54, 55, &c.

there is somewhat of truth on both sides : but if either think to carry the matter to the utmost, I think also there will be mistakes on both hands. It is too much to say that they discovered nothing in reference to religion by the mere light of nature : and on the other hand it savours of gross ignorance to say that all we meet with in the writings of the ancient sages, was discovered by the light of nature. Nothing is more evident, than that many things have been handed from nation to nation, and age to age by tradition. This no modest man will or can deny ; it has been so clearly made out by many.

What I assert, and shall attempt to prove, is, "That many of the most notable things that we meet with in the heathen writers, in matters of religion, are not to be looked on as discoveries made by the light of nature ; but as truths, whereof they were informed by tradition. And moreover, that when we find them asserting some of those truths, which to us, who enjoy the scriptures, and by the scripture have our reason improved, appear to have a foundation in reason, we are not therefore to conclude, that reason led them to those truths ; but rather, that in many cases, they had even those from tradition."

In proving this point, I shall not proceed by single instances ; but shall lay down these general considerations, which at once clear the truth of our assertion, and discover whence these traditions might come, and how easily they might be conveyed to them. Particular instances may be had in great abundance from those, who have, of set purpose, largely insisted on this subject. Amongst others, Huetius in his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, has largely discoursed of particular instances of this nature. I think the following observations taken together and duly considered, will put our assertion beyond question with the sober and judicious.

I. It is most certain, that the Jews, however in other regards considerable, which makes it still the more observable, had more full, clear, and certain knowledge of the true God, religion, and matters of worship, than all the world besides. If the Deists please to controvert this proposition, we shall debate it with them when they please. And I dare be bold to say, that I shall prove that there is more true and rational divinity in one of the books of Moses, than they shall be able to find in all the heathen writers, when they have put all, that has been said by all of them, together.

II. Their neighbours, and more especially the Egyptians, had many fair occasions of obtaining acquaintance with their opinions and practices in matters of religion. Several persons at distant times, went out from the church, and settled in distant nations. Ishmael went out from Abraham's family, and Esau from that of Isaac. Now it cannot be supposed, how wicked soever these persons were, but they would carry out with them some true notions, opinions, and practices in matters of religion. Nor can it reasonably be denied, that they founded their new governments, on some of these notices, though variously blended and mixed with corrupt additions and alterations, both in matters of opinion and practice. And it is evident, that these hints, or remainders of truth, in matters of opinion and practice, as they were mixed with these corruptions, would obtain a general and great respect, as being found useful for maintaining order in societies, as being delivered to them, by the first founders of their nations, as being commended by their practice

and perhaps established by laws and constitutions. Whence it is not possibly to be supposed, that these notices or practices could in an age or a few ages wear out.

Again it is particularly observable in this case, that the church was, for a long tract of time, in a wandering and unsettled state; which obliged them to more of intimacy with the nations that lay near them, than afterwards was necessary, when they were settled in a land, by themselves apart, and were, by divine constitutions, barred from that familiarity. Moreover, as to the Egyptians, they had much occasion of being particularly acquainted with the Jews' opinions and practices, in the matters of God: the Israelites dwelt among them (besides what occasional converse they had before) about 217 years together. The correspondence was again renewed in Solomon's time by his matching with the king of Egypt's daughter. Jeremiah, and a great company with him, remained a considerable time in Egypt, and prophesied there to the Jews, who had at that time no separate dwellings, and prophesied concerning Egypt; which, together with the reputation he had got at Jerusalem, by his predictions, that were remarkably verified, the notice taken of him by the king of Babylon, and the contest he had, with those of his own nation, could not but make him much regarded.

It is further considerable, that there were many things, which may reasonably be supposed to excite an uncommon curiosity in the Egyptians, to understand the religion of the Jews. It is known what a place Joseph long had in Egypt, and how he managed it. Afterwards the people, while under bondage, were scattered through the land, and the piety of some of them appearing in their sufferings, could not but be taken notice of, as their scattering through the land gave occasion to the Egyptians to inquire, as to the principles that influenced it. The miraculous appearances of God on behalf of that people in Egypt and their neighbourhood, in the wilderness, would have excited the curiosity of a people, much less inquisitive than they were. The reputation of Solomon, his alliance with the crown of Egypt and his traffic with them, as they gave a new occasion, so could not but spur them on, to inquire further into matters of this sort. If, to all this, you add the general character, writers of all sorts give of the Egyptians, that they were a people more than ordinarily fond about matters of religion, in so much that our author Herbert observes, they are said to be the first that taught religion;* and if further it is considered, that the Gentiles, finding the unsatisfactoriness of their own opinions and practices in matters of religion, were very much inclined to change, and adopt the customs, practices, and way of every nation in matters of religion, to try if they could find any thing more satisfying than their own. If, I say, all these are laid together, it cannot be doubted that the neighbouring nations, and particularly the Egyptians, learned many things from the Jews in matters of religion.

III. It is observable, that all these things fell out a considerable time before any of those great men appeared or flourished in the world, whose writings are come to us, and contain those truths, concerning the rise whereof we now discourse. The seven sages, Thales, Solon, Pittacus, Bias, Chilas, Periander, and Cleobulus, who raised the reputation

* De Rel. Gent. p.

of Greece, did not flourish till about the time of the Babylonish captivity and long after the dispersion of the ten Tribes ; some do reckon it 125 years.* Socrates and Plato flourished not for near 150 years after these. Now these are among the first, who made any considerable figure for learning of this sort, in the heathen world, whose writings are come to us.

IV. All these great men did, for their own improvement, travel into foreign nations, and made it their business to learn their opinions and practices : particularly we are told of the most considerable of them by Diogenes Laertius, and others, that they were very concerned to know the opinions of the Egyptian priests in matters of religion, and most of what they knew in these matters was taught them by those. This will be denied by none, that is acquainted with the lives of those persons.

V. It is further observable, that, in many instances, there is such a plain resemblance in their opinions to the scripture accounts of the origin of the world, the deluge, the peopling of the earth, and most other things, as could not be casual ; but shows plainly that they were derived thence. This in particular instances, by many, particularly Huetius and others, to whom he refers, is so fully demonstrated, that it cannot, without manifest impudence, be denied.

VI. Which comes yet somewhat nearer to our purpose, it is very observable even as to those truths, which have some foundation in reason, such as these, about the immortality of the souls of men, and their state after death, and the like, that these great men of old proposed them commonly, without offering any proof of them, or any reasons for them. Now it is not credible that, if they had been led to those notices by reason, they would have offered those important truths, without offering reasons of them. This observation we find made, as to its substance, though not on such views, by no less a person than Cicero, who knew as well how matters then stood, to speak modestly, as any now can do.

VII. Nor is it less considerable to prove, that the notions, which prevailed about the immortality of the soul, and a future state (and the like may be said of many others) were not learned from reason, but from tradition ; and the impression and persuasion of these truths were more generally entertained, and more strongly rivetted among the vulgar than among the philosophers. Whole shoals of them or *catervæ*, as Cicero speaks, denied and derided all these things, which the vulgar firmly believed.

VIII. When these great men of old do give reasons of their opinions, they are such, as any one may see, never led them to opinions : but having by tradition received them, they were ashamed to hold them, without being capable to give any reason for what they held, and therefore they set their wits on the rack to find out what to say for them. And it was but seldom they hit on the true ones. For most part their reasonings are plainly childish, trifling, and sophistical. It were easy to demonstrate this as to the arguments of Socrates and Plato for the immortality of the soul, they are plain sophisms : and upon what design they were urged, we have heard before, to confirm themselves in an

* Le Clerk Comput. Hist. p. 35. 40.

opinion, the belief whereof was accompanied with some advantage. A learned person says justly, "That Plato endeavours to prove the immortality of the soul by such reasons, as, if they conclude any thing, would conclude it to be a god. And the same may be said of Cicero and others."*

IX. It is moreover remarkable, to this purpose, that not only are there many things to be met with in the writings and practices of the ancient writers amongst the heathens, whereof no colourable reason can be given, nor any account made, otherwise, than by ascribing them to ancient and corrupted traditions; but it is further remarkable that they knew not how to manage or improve those hints, which were this way handed to them. Most of them quite spoil these things in the telling. A few of the more wise, conscious of their own ignorance, yet wanting humility and ingenuity enough to acknowledge it, wrap themselves in clouds, and express themselves darkly to conceal their own ignorance from the vulgar, and one that understands, would not know whether to laugh or be angry, to see their fond admirers, in later ages, sweating to search sublime meanings from words which the writers themselves really understood not.

X. In the last place, we find the ancients themselves, on some occasions, owning, that they owed the first discoveries of these things to tradition. Dacier in the life of Plato, tells us, "That he first instructs them in religion, about which he establishes nothing, without having consulted God; that is, nothing but what is conformable to true tradition and ancient oracles."† To evince the truth of this, Plato's own words are subjoined; "God," says Plato, "as we are taught by ancient tradition, having in himself the beginning, the middle, and end of all things, always goes on in his way, according to his nature, without ever stepping aside; he is followed by justice, which never fails to punish the transgressions committed against his law."‡ And a little after, speaking about the punishments of the wicked, he proceeds thus, "They are not limited to the miseries of this life, nor to death itself, from which even good men are not exempt; for these are penalties too light and short, but they are horrible torments." But yet more remarkable to this purpose are his words in his epistles, "But reliance is always to be put in the ancient and sacred writings, which declare that we have immortal souls, and that we have judges, by whose appointment the greatest rewards and the greatest punishments shall be assigned to our deservings, as soon as any one departs this life."§

¶ Lay these things together, and as they are in themselves evident enough; so I think they amount to a full demonstration of the assertion, we have above laid down, for the proof whereof we adduced them; and they do abundantly show, how inconsiderately every thing met with in ancient writers, is put upon the score of nature's light.

* Dr How, Living Temple, Pt. I. p. 122.

† Plato de Legibus, lib. 4.

‡ Life of Plato, p. 86.

§ Plato epist. 7.

CHAP. XVII.

Wherein we consider what Herbert's opinion was to the sufficiency of his articles, and offer some reflections showing how foolish and ridiculous the pretences of the deists to their sufficiency are.

WE have now demonstrated that these five articles did not universally obtain in the world, and that consequently the heathen world had not the means necessary to salvation. But should we grant what has been above evicted false, that these articles did universally obtain, yet all is not done, nor is the difficulty so got over; for we are not agreed, that these, though acknowledged, are alone sufficient.

We know our author would bear us in hand, that they are sufficient. He tells us to this purpose, that when he had found them out, he saw that there was nothing wanting to make a complete religion. And indeed our author is so bold as to challenge all the world to show what can be added to these five articles. And growing bold, by this imaginary success, he proceeds to inveigh, though more covertly, against the satisfaction of Christ as destructive to piety. Of which he gives a most disingenuous account, as commonly he does of all the articles of revealed religion, which he has occasion to mention.

But however confident our author is, of the sufficiency of his five articles in this place; yet elsewhere he shows he had not over much certainty in his own mind, about this matter.*

Thus we have seen what his opinion is: it now remains that we offer some reflections on it. Many offer themselves; I shall only touch at a few.

I. Though the deists are as desirous as any, to confine religion to a narrow compass, and perhaps it is as much their interest, as it is of any sort of men, that it should consist of few articles; yet, for shame they cannot make it contain less, than those five articles. They own, and must own all those necessary to salvation, both in belief and practice. It is not possible, they themselves being judges, to reach the ends of religion, if any of them are cut off. Since then we have above proved that these did not universally obtain, it is plain, that all mankind had not sufficient knowledge of religion. Thus it is in fact.

But now where shall the blame of this be laid? On themselves? On the priests? Or on God? This last cannot be said. Well then, must these villains for priests, with whom our author and all the succeeding deists are so angry, bear the blame of it, in that they did not better teach and instruct the people, in the grounds of sincere religion; But though our author, and all the deists would fain lodge the blame here; yet I am scarce satisfied of the justice of the charge; though I am willing to own, that they were for most part arch villains: for how shall it be made appear that they themselves knew these grounds of sincere religion? I know our author blames them for not imparting the knowledge of sincere religion to the people, and that he may be sure to shut the door upon them, that they may not escape them, he adds, by way of parenthesis, They at least knew that religion well enough."

* Herbert de Religione Gentilium. p. 180. sub finem.

But how proves he this, that they know that chaste and sincere religion well enough; might not they be supposed ignorant of it, as well as most of the philosophers, the greatest moralists not excepted? Again, I do not well see what right they had to teach, or how they were obliged. Did the law of nature authorize them to be public teachers? I believe the deists think not. Was not every man able to shift for himself, and find the way to blessedness? If he was, what need was there to trust these villanous priests? who was obliged to listen to them? If every man was not able, without the help of some instructor, then, if that instructor failed in his duty, as it is certain they did almost perpetually, nay our author will not allow, nor see I any need of that almost, what becomes of the poor vulgar, who, without instruction, cannot reach competent knowledge? He is not able to reach it, his instructors fail of their duty. And for any thing I see, the poor man wants, and must always want a sufficient religion, and that without any fault of his.

Well then, avoidably either every man is able to do, and know for himself, in matters of religion; or a great many, even most of the poor vulgar, are lost for good and all; and there is no help for it, and that without their fault. If the last be said, our author has lost his point quite, and if this be a fault, he will lay it at the door of providence, that has not sufficiently provided all men, in the means necessary for their future happiness. If the first be said, then the blame must lie at every man's own door. But methinks our author is not willing of this; for he would always excuse the vulgar, and suppose them so rude and ignorant they had neither will, courage, nor ability to step otherwise, than they were led. But after all, the fault must be lodged at their doors, or the deists' whole cause is lost. I confess any one that was under such impressions of their stupid ignorance, as our author seems to have been, will even think it hard enough to say that every one of them had this ability, to find out a sufficient religion; and I believe, not without ground; though I still think, that they might have known, and done more than they did; but this will do the deists' cause no service.

2. But further, the deists must own that natural religion, according to this mould of it, at least, did never obtain in purity, without any additions, in any place of the world. Our author confesses, that on this foundation, there was every where a strange superstructure raised. After he has spoken of those articles, he subjoins, "such therefore were parts of the purer religion of the Gentiles; the others they had in their power to withstand, as made up of fanciful stories, allegorical conceits, &c. which, to the loss of mankind, involved something that seemed perfectly foolish, and also impious."* Now, this being the case, I would gladly know if our author's five articles are looked upon as of such virtue, that they could hallow all these additions, made to them, or at least, so far antidote the poison of them, that persons, who embraced this complex frame of religion, consisting of these five articles, and such additions as in every nation were made to them, might yet reach happiness, or not.

It is pretended † that these five articles of natural religion, though contaminated with these additions (as our author speaks when he enters upon his discourse about those orthodox points of reli-

* P. 212. † P. 184, cap. 4. at the close.

gion,*) are sufficient to lead to happiness; then this is plainly to say, that the religion of every country was good and sufficient, and that every one might be saved by that religion he was bred in. If the defence of this is undertaken, it will be found a pretty hard province and one it will not easily be able to defend, that the complex religion of every country was sufficient, or that the virtue of those articles was such, as to preserve from the hurt of the additions. What if, in the complex frame of most religions of the world, some of our author's fundamental articles are justled out of their own place? Perhaps, while each religion sets up for so many inferior gods, they rob the "one supreme God" of much of his glory, to adorn these imaginary gods with. It may be, more stress is laid on rites than on virtue, which our author makes the principal part of worship. Perhaps more stress is laid on their rites for expiation, than on repentance. What if the additions made are such, as are utterly inconsistent with a due regard to these articles, or a just improvement of them? What if there are other things yoked in with them in most religions, that are as derogatory to the honour of God, as these can be supposed conducive for its advancement? How can such a horrid medley of things "sound and unsound, orthodox foundations and impious superstructures," be acceptable to God, or useful to man? One half, to wit, our author's five catholic articles, is designed to lead men to bliss, pretend the deists: and the other, to wit, the rites and ceremonies, are designed to the worst of purposes, by those villains of priests, who aim at cheating the world. Now, how shall such cross designs agree or consist? Or, how can means adapted to so very different, nay, quite opposite ends, be united and hang together? Or, if they are united, how can that religion, which consists of such jarring and incoherent materials, turn to any account? But this opinion is so ridiculous, that I need not insist in disapproving of it. No man of sobriety can ever pretend that these articles can be of any use, if each of them is not kept in its own place, and if care is not taken to guard against all additions, which are inconsistent with a due respect to those articles. Some little additions, perhaps, he might suppose, would do no great hurt: but if there are any, that entrench on the foundations, and put them out of their place, the whole fabric falls, and all is ruined. Now, I think it were no hard work to prove, that the additions were such, in every nation, as rendered the whole utterly useless, and insufficient to any of the most considerable ends of religion, either with respect to God or man.

But, if it is pretended, that while those five articles are asserted sufficient, it is only meant, that if two persons would abandon all those extravagant and filthy additions, which every where are made to them, and only regard them, then in following these, they might attain to life, and eternal happiness: if, I say, this is alleged, then I would ask, how shall we distinguish betwixt those articles and others that are interwoven with them, in each country? By what marks shall the necessaries be known from the not necessaries? The fundamentals from the accessaries? Is every man able with our author, to dissect and inspect the several religions of the countries, where they

* Herbert de Veritate, p. 272.

live, and separate the necessaries from those that are not so? Our author found this a pretty hard task. What shall poor mean people then think of it? Our author has shown what fair pleas might be made for many of the most pernicious parts of the religions of the nations. Would a poor country man be able to rid his feet of such fetters? It is utterly impossible that the one half of mankind could distinguish betwixt what was to be rejected, and what was to be retained. In a word, it is evident, that all the world over, things pernicious and destructive were so twisted in with things of another sort, and such fair pleas made for them, that it was utterly impossible for the poor ignorant vulgar to divide the one from the other. Since then these five articles signify nothing unless they were severed from these other things, which were every where interwoven with them, and most part of mankind were utterly unable to do this, which I doubt no man ever did before our author, it seems evident, that of whatever use they may be to our author, who was so sharp-sighted, as to spy them out and distinguish them from the other things with which they were mixed; yet they can be of no use to the far greater part of mankind, and consequently the far greater part of the human race still must be owned destitute of the means that may be justly termed sufficient to lead them to future happiness. These five articles, as in fact they have always been interwoven with other things, were not sufficient to save any; and whatever their force might be, if they had been severed from other things, yet they not being so, before our author did it, and most part of men being utterly incapable of making this distinction, they must be looked on as insufficient to many, at least, of mankind, who therefore certainly were destitute of means needful for future happiness, and so left to perish. I know our author pretends that some were able to distinguish, and did make a difference betwixt these articles and the additions: "But the Gentiles had unquestionably received these five articles, as what was inscribed upon their hearts,—though I think they rather hesitated in regard to the superadditions, especially those that were the more wise among them."* How ill grounded our author's confidence as to the universal acceptance of his five articles is, we have seen above. What he subjoins about the Gentiles distinguishing the additions that were made to them from them, comes not up to the point: for the question is not, whether some could thus distinguish the one from the other; but, whether all did or could? And when he pretends that some of the more discerning did so, what proof advances he? nothing but his bold, *I suppose*. This reflection might be further urged, but I shall pass it, and proceed to another.

3. How shall one be satisfied that these five articles are all that were necessary; or that they are sufficient? Are the deists all agreed about this? No, we have heard one above making seven necessary. Nay, our author is not too confident, as we have heard above. He is not very sure about the sufficiency of those articles. But he seems pretty positive that there is no other article discoverable by the common reason of mankind, that can be of any great use, or that is necessary to answer the great ends of religion, the public peace and bettering of mankind. But we see the deists are not all agreed here. Some think more needful. But I have two or three words to say to all this; may no article

be allowed necessary that is controverted? So our author insinuates. And Blount in his *Religio Laici* * is positive oftener than once. Then I would know of the deists, have never these articles any or all of them been controverted? Have not we already proven, that the first article has been controverted, concerning the being of "one supreme God?" Is not our author's third article, viz. "That virtue" (as it is discoverable by the light of nature) "is the principal part of the worship of God," disputed by Christians? Do not the followers of Spinoza deny repentance to be a duty, and that in compliance with their master, who pretends to demonstrate in his *Ethics*, "That he who repents is twice miserable?" † Has not the fifth been controverted by many of old? Let any one who denies this, read Cicero, lib. i. *Tusc. Quest.* or Plato's *Phedon*, and they will learn that it has been controverted by more wise men than have embraced it. And do not very many of our modern deists call it in question? Again, have there not been some other articles as universally agreed, as little controverted, and perhaps less than some of these? To give but one instance, has not the article about the worship of God, that he was to be worshipped with some solemn external worship, whom we owned as God, been as much agreed to, as any of the rest? Doth it not arise from the common reason of mankind? But I shall wave this.

4. There is another thing, that I would know of the deists, anent their five articles. Do they think them, as they are proposed, sufficient? or must they not be well explained? If, as they are proposed, I would gladly see the man that can have the face to maintain, what is not only untrue but ridiculous. Will, for instance, the owning virtue to be the principal part of the worship of God, signify any thing to the world, while they know not, and are not agreed what is virtue and what is vice? Is not this to mock the world, to propose general articles, and tell the world is agreed about them, while yet one half is not agreed what is the true signification of these general words? Is not this a plain cheat? 'Tis true, Blount, who has copied all from our author, as the present deists do from him, tells us that these articles must be well explained. "Neither can I," says he, "imagine so much as one article more in common reason, that could make man better, or more pious, when the aforesaid were rightly explicated and observed." ‡ But now, are not these articles sufficient, unless rightly explicated? No, he dares not say it. Well, was the world agreed about this right explication of them? Who ever did rightly explain them? Point us to the one person who did it, either for himself or others? Was every body able to do it for himself? If not, then I fear the world wanted still a sufficient religion, after all pains taken to provide them in one. And further, what is the meaning of our author's wording the third article, "that virtue is the principal part of the worship of God?" This may be true, though it be not the only part. Well, though it is the principal part, may there not be another part necessary? Though perhaps the head of a man is the principal part, yet there are some other parts necessary. Was not the world as much agreed that there should be another part, as that this was a part of the worship of God? I believe

* Compare P. 3 and 4. † *Spin. Ethics*, P. 4. prop. 54. *Pœnitentia virtus non est, sive ex ratione non oritur, quem facti pœnitet, bis miser seu impotens est.*

‡ *Religio Laici*, p. 73.

it is easy to prove the world was more agreed as to the first than the last. Why then must this be overlooked? I believe I could guess pretty near. He was afraid to do it, because he saw that he would presently be confounded with the differences about the way of worship, and that he would never be able to maintain, that reason was sufficient to direct as to the solemn worship of God: and that, if he should assert it, he would have not only Christians to dispute the point with him, but heathens. But lest it should be thought what is alleged of the heathens looking on reason as incompetent for this, is groundless, I shall only copy you a little of Socrates and Alcibiades' discourse about worship out of Plato, or rather remind the reader of what we quoted from him. Socrates meets Alcibiades going to the temple to pray, and dissuades him from it, because he knew not how to do it, till one should come and teach him. Soc. says, "It is altogether necessary you should wait for some person to teach you how you ought to behave yourself, both towards the gods and men." Alcib. replies, "And when will that time come, Socrates? And who is he that will instruct me? With what pleasure should I look upon him?" Whereupon Socrates bids him hope "that God will do it, and will take the mist off his soul, and cure him of that darkness, that hinders him from distinguishing betwixt good and evil." Whereupon Alcib. says, "I think I must defer my sacrifices to that time." To which Soc. returns, "you have reason. It is more safe to do so, than run so great a risk."* And the same Plato elsewhere tells us, "That this instructor must be a person somewhat more than human." Nor was Jamblichus, a famous Platonic philosopher, who lived in the fourth century, otherwise minded, whose words, as I find them translated by Mr Ferguson, run thus: "It is not easy to know what God will be pleased with, unless we be either immediately instructed by God ourselves, or taught by some person whom God hath conversed with, or arrive at the knowledge of it by some divine means or other." †

5. There is another thing that I would gladly be informed aent, and that is, whether every sort of knowledge of them be sufficient? Or, is a clear, certain, and firm persuasion needful? If the first, how can a dark, uncertain, and wavering knowledge have that influence upon practice, and that vigour to excite to a compliance with them, which is absolutely needful in order to attain the benefit of them? If the latter, how will our author prove, that it was any where to be met with, as to them all, in the heathen world? Or, how will he make it appear, that it is attainable by mere reason? Methinks our author's words above-quoted, as to the fifth article, seem not to import any great certainty. This might be urged to that degree, that it would be very hard, nay, I fear not to say, impossible for the deists to rid their feet of it.

I would further know, will these five articles be sufficient to this end to lead to eternal happiness, whether men direct to it or not? Is not the intention of some consideration in moral actions? And what if I should deny that the religion of heathens was directed to this end, the obtaining of future happiness? If I should, I know some very great men are of my mind. I shall name two, the one a Christian, the other a heathen. The first is the famous Samuel Puffendorf counsellor of

* M. Dacier's Plato Englished, vol. 1. p. 249, 250. Second Alcibiad. or of Prayer.

† Lib. 4. de Lege Civ. by Dr Leslie, against the Jew. p. 386. Ferg. Enquir. into Mor. Virtue, &c. p. 177. Jambli. de Vita. Pythag. cap. 28.

state to the late king of Sweden. His words are worthy to be here transcribed, though somewhat long. "Now to look back to the first beginnings of things, we find, that before the nativity of our Saviour, the inhabitants of the whole universe, except the Jews, lived in gross ignorance as to spiritual affairs. For what was commonly taught concerning the gods, was for the most part involved in fables, and most extravagant absurdities. It is true, some of the learned among them have pretended to give some rational account concerning the nature of the gods and the soul; but all this in so imperfect and dubious a manner, that they themselves remained very uncertain in the whole matter. They agreed almost all of them in this point, that mankind ought to apply itself to the practice of virtue; but they did not propose any other fruits, but the honour and benefits, which thence did accrue to civil society. For what the poets did give out concerning the rewards of virtue and punishments of vice after death, was by these, who pretended to be the wisest among them, looked upon as fables, invented to terrify and keep in awe the common people. The rest of the people lived at random, and what the heathens called religion, did not contain any doctrine or certain articles concerning the knowledge of divine matters. But the greatest part of their religious worship consisted in sacrifices and ceremonies, which tended more to sports and voluptuousness, than to the contemplation of divine things. Wherefore the heathen religion did neither edify in this life, nor afford any hopes or comfort at the time of death."* Thus far he. Now, methinks, here is a quite different account of the heathen world from that which our author gives us, and that given by no churchman, but a statesman; and one as learned as our author too, and that both in history and the law of nature, as his works evince, and in my opinion it is the juster of the two accounts. The second is Varro quoted by our author,† who divides the religion of the heathens into three sorts. The first is that of the poets, which is altogether fabulous. The other, which he calls natural, is that of the philosophers, which is wholly employed about the nature of the gods. And Varro expressly says, it was not meet for, nor of any use to the vulgar. The third sort was what he calls civil, which was wholly calculated for human society, and its support; and to this all the public worship belonged, if we may believe Varro in the passage we now speak of. When he has opened the nature of each of them, he concludes with an account of the design of them. "The first kind was chiefly accommodated to the theatre, the second to the world, the third to the city." No word here of eternal life, as the design of any of them. The passage itself fully excludes it, and, had it not been too long, had been worthy to be transcribed.

7. To draw to a conclusion, was it enough to the heathens that these things were sufficient, although they did not know them to be so? Or was it needful that they should know them to be so? If the last be said, how could they be sure about that, even the vulgar sort of them, that our author, after all his application to this controversy, could not win to be sure of? If the first be said, I would ask any deist, was not the end of natural religion fixed, and were they not certain about it? If it was not, how could they use or choose means, or direct them to an

* *Introduct. Hist. of Europe*, p. 357. ch. 12. par. 2. † P. 227.

end which was not fixed, and they were not certain? Or might they not, at least, be fixed and certain about it? If it was, then with what courage could they use means with respect to an end, and means, in the use of which they had so many difficulties to grapple with; yet they could not be sure that they were sufficient by the least use of them to gain the end? Was it enough of encouragement, that they might use them at all adventures, not knowing whether they were, in themselves, sufficient to reach the mark or not? Methinks our author is very defective as to motives to excite to virtue.

CHAP. XVIII.

Containing an answer to some of the principal arguments of the deists for the sufficiency of natural religion.

WE have now considered what the deists plead from universal consent; and have sufficiently cleared that it is not by them proven, that the world was agreed as to these articles; that indeed the world did not agree about them; that even they who owned them, were led to this acknowledgment, at least of some of them, rather by tradition than the light of nature; and that, though they had acknowledged them, they are not sufficient. It now remains that we consider those arguments, wherein they conceive the great strength of their cause to lie.

The first argument, which indeed is the strongest the deists can pretend unto, is thus proposed by their admired Herbert: “*Et quidem quum media ad victum, vestitumque heic commoda suppeditant cunctis natura sive providentia rerum communis, suspicari non potui, eundem deum, sive ex natura, sive ex gratia, in suppeditandis ad beatiorem hoc nostro statum, mediis, ulli hominum deesse posse vel velle, adeo ut licet mediis illis parum recte, vel feliciter usi sint gentiles, haud ita tamen per Deum optimum maximum steterit, quo minus salvi fierent.*” * To the same purpose speaks Blount in his *Religio Laici*, and A. W. in his letter to him in the *Oracles of Reason*, of whom afterwards. The force of all that is here pleaded will best appear, if it is put in a clear argument, and I shall be sure not to wrong it in the proposal. The argument runs thus: “The goodness of God makes it necessary that all men be provided in the means necessary for future bliss.—But all men are provided in no other means of attaining future bliss, save the light of nature.—Therefore no other means are necessary for all men save the light of nature.” The minor or second proposition needs not to be proven, since it is owned by those who maintain revelation, that it is not given to all men, and therefore that many have indeed no other light to guide them, save that of nature, in matters of religion, or in any of their other concerns.

The first proposition, “that the goodness of God makes it necessary that all men be provided in the means of attaining future blessedness,” is that which they are concerned to prove. And the strength of what they urge for proof of it amounts in short to this. “The goodness and

* *De Religione Gentilium*, p. 4.

wisdom of God seem to render it necessary that all creatures, but more especially the rational, be provided in all means necessary to obtain those ends they were made capable of, and obliged to pursue.—But men are made capable of, and obliged to pursue eternal happiness and felicity.—Therefore the goodness and wisdom of God make it necessary that all men should be provided in the means necessary to obtain future and eternal bliss.”

Here we have the strength of their cause, and we shall therefore consider this argument the more seriously, because some seem to be taken with it, and look upon it as having much force. Before I offer any direct answer, I shall make some general reflections on it. The first process is only designed to make way for this last, which indeed is the argument, and contains the force of what is pleaded by the deists. Now concerning this argument, we offer the few following reflections, which will not a little weaken its credit, and make it look suspicious like.

I. That proposition whereon its whole weight leans, viz. “That the goodness of God obliges him to provide his creatures in the means necessary for attaining their ends,” is one of that sort, anent which we may, in particular cases and applications of it, be as easily mistaken, and are as little *in tuto*, to be positive in our determinations, as any where else. For, although we are surer of nothing than that God is good, and must act congruously to his goodness in general; yet when we come to make particular inferences, and determine what, in point of goodness, he is obliged to do, we are upon very slippery ground, especially if we have not, as in this case it is, the effects to guide us. For besides, that goodness is free in its effects, and not affixed to such stated rules, knowable by us, as justice is, divine goodness in its actings is under the conduct and management of all-comprehending wisdom, which, in every case wherein God is to act, considers that a being not only infinitely good is to act, but also one who is infinitely wise, holy, just, and righteous; and therefore his all-comprehending wisdom takes under consideration, or rather has in its view the concernment of all those properties of the divine nature; and withal, all the circumstances belonging to each particular case, and takes care that the case, in all its circumstances, be so managed, that not one of the divine perfections shine to the eclipsing of another; but that all of them appear with a suitable lustre. Now, it is certain that we who are of so narrow understandings, and so many other ways incapacitated to judge of the ways of God, cannot reach either the different interests of the divine properties, and judge, in a particular circumstantiated case, what befits a God, who is at once good, holy, wise, and righteous; nor can we reach all that infinite variety of circumstances, which lying open to the all-comprehending view of infinite and consummate wisdom, may make it appear quite otherwise to him, than to us. Hence, in fact, we see that an almost infinite number of things fall out in the government of the world, which we know not how to reconcile to divine goodness; and as many are left undone, which we would be apt to think infinite goodness would make necessary to be done. This consideration, if well weighed, would make men very sparing in determining any thing necessary to be done, in respect of divine goodness, which either it is evident he has not done, or of which we are not sure that he has done it, which per-

haps we shall make appear, if it is not, from what has been already said, evident to be the case.

II. I observe as to what is subsumed, "that man is made capable of, and obliged in duty to pursue eternal felicity;" that although from revelation we know this, as to man in his original constitution, to be true, and by the remaining desires of it we may guess that possibly it was so; yet if we set aside divine revelation, and consider man in his present state, concerning which the question betwixt us and the deists proceeds, we cannot, by the help of nature's light only, with any certainty, conclude, that "man is capable of, and obliged to pursue eternal felicity." We see the man dissolved by death. The light of nature knows nothing of a resurrection. Without a resurrection there is nothing can be said for man's eternal felicity. Though we grant his soul to have no principle of corruption in itself and so to be in this sense immortal; yet this cannot secure us against the fears of annihilation: and the desires of a felicity, from which we may be induced to suspect some such state designed for man, being apparently frustrated, by the dissolution of man, to which they have a respect, cannot but make men, who have no more save the light of nature, hesitate mightily about this assertion; since it is plain, that the desires we find in ourselves of felicity, do respect the whole man; and the aversion we have to dissolution respects our natures in their present entire frame and constitution. Besides, it is of moment, that if man, now entire, is at a loss how to judge of the ends for which he was made, much more must he be supposed in a strait how to judge, and determine for what ends, any particular part belonging to his constitution was designed, after the dissolution of the whole in a separate state, that is, in all its concerns, so much hid from and unknown to us. Further, although undoubtedly, as long as we are, it is our duty to make it our chief aim to please God, and seek for felicity only in him; yet since, not only our beings, but that felicity, which may be supposed attainable by us, are emanations from sovereign, free, and undeserved bounty, without some intimation from him, in way of promise, we can draw no sure conclusion, as to its continuance, were we innocent, much less can we, being guilty.

III. This argument concludes nothing in favour of the deists; whatever it may say for the heathens. For were it granted, that God is obliged to provide all men in the means necessary to future felicity; and that he has not given all men any other means; yet it cannot be hence inferred, that he has given no other means to some. In this case, if all this were granted, which yet we have not done, it would follow, that they, who have no other means, must look on these as sufficient, and that they really are so. But still God is left at liberty to prescribe other duties to any particular persons, or nations, by revelation; and if this revelation come, they are obliged, to whom it comes, to attend, receive, and obey it. Now if the scriptures be a divine revelation, attended with sufficient evidence, which the deists must either allow, or overthrow what it pleads for itself; they are everlastingly undone, unless they receive it, and comply with it.

IV. I observe, that the conclusion of this argument, which it aims at the establishment of, viz. "That God, in point of goodness, must provide all men in means necessary to future felicity, and consequently has done it," is exceedingly prejudiced, by its lying cross to the plain sense

and experience of the world in all ages, as has been plainly made appear. Now in this case, where the principles or premises are dark, and such, whereabout we may easily be mistaken, which is the case here, as appears by the two first reflections. And the contradiction to what we must certainly know, and have experience of; in this case we have reason to conclude, that there lies certainly a fallacy or mistake in one or other of the principles; though we cannot discover presently where it precisely is. And therefore, although men could not easily except against the premises or principles, whence it is deduced; yet they would think themselves sufficiently warranted, if not plainly to reject, yet to be shy in admitting the conclusion: forasmuch as the admitting the conclusion will oblige them to deny what their own sense and experience, as well as that of the world, assures them about: whereas, it is much more reasonable to think and determine that there lies some fallacy in the principles, though it may be they are not in case to detect it. No man, by the arguments against motion, can be brought to question its being, much less, its possibility; yet there are thousands, even no mean scholars, who cannot answer the arguments that conclude against it. But in very deed, this argument is not so strong, as to need so much nicety.

Having thus far weakened it by these general reflections, I shall next lay down and clear some propositions that will lay a foundation for a close answer to it.

I. All men, at present, are involved in guilt, have corrupt inclinations, and are under an inability to yield perfect obedience to the law they are subjected to. That all, in more or less, are guilty of sin, cannot be well denied, and we have heard the Oracles of Reason owning, "that all men do err sometimes, even the best, in their actions. That men are corrupt," or have "corrupt inclinations," has been above sufficiently evinced. That all are under some sort of inability to yield perfect obedience, is attested by the experience of all; and besides, is an inevitable consequent of the former; for it is not possible to suppose one possessed of corrupt inclination, and yet able to yield perfect obedience. Nor need we stand to prove what the deists own: for A. W. in his letter to Charles Blount, speaking of the law of nature, says, "I do not say that we are perfectly to obey it." I dispute not now of what sort this inability is, whether only moral, such as arises from the will's inclination to evil; or natural, which imports such an inability as supposes the nature of the faculties vitiated, though the faculties are not wanting. The condemnings of our own hearts, and the nature of the moral government we are under, sufficiently assure us, it is such as does not excuse from fault; and further we are not concerned; though, after all, I do not understand how the will can be fixed in an inclination to evil, or aversion from good, unless the nature of the will be supposed affected with some indisposition, though the faculty is not removed. But of this only by the by. It is enough to our present purpose, that man is guilty, corrupt, and thence unable. He that will deny this must suppose us blind and senseless.

II. If reason can ascertain of any thing, it does of this, that things were not originally thus with man, or that man, when he was first made, was not thus guilty, corrupt, or impotent. None will dare to say, that he at first was guilty. And to assert him either corrupt or imported,

overthrows all the just notions we have of the Deity. How can it be supposed that infinite wisdom could enact laws, which were not only likely to take effect, but really could not possibly be obeyed by men subjected to them! How can we suppose infinite goodness to establish laws under a penalty, and deny the powers, which were indispensably requisite to obey them, and without which it was not possible to evade the penalty! How can we suppose infinite righteousness and holiness to consent to a constitution of this kind! How is it conceivable, that a God wise, just, and good, should have originally implanted in our natures, inclinations contrary to those laws, that were the transcript of, and bore the impress of all these perfections! Or, how can we once dream that he implanted inclinations, which it was criminal to satisfy or comply with! For my part, I see not what can be reasonably said in answer to this.

III. It is further evident, that man could not have fallen into this state he now is in, or from that wherein he was made, but by his own default. If this is denied, I inquire, where shall the blame be lodged? —will they lodge it at God's door? Besides, that this is blasphemy, it is further evident, that all the former absurdities will recur: for it is to no purpose to give powers, and take them away again, without any default in the person who loses them, the obligation to obedience or suffering upon disobedience still continuing. Nor can it be lodged upon any other, because if man is without his own fault, robbed of the powers necessary to obey, the obligation to obedience cannot be righteously continued. Nor was it consistent with the divine wisdom, to have obliged men to obedience, under a penalty, while there was a possibility of man's losing the power to obey, without a fault on his own part. It remains then, that man has by his own fault forfeited what he has in this part lost. And to this, our own conscience, and the consciences of all sinners, who are sensible of sin, consent that God is free, and we guilty.

IV. Hereon it inevitably follows, that man is at present in a corrupt, sinful, and impotent state, into which by his own default, he has fallen. Nor see I how it is possible to evade this, which only sums up the three preceding assertions. The first whereof is undeniable with sober and ingenuous persons, being attested by the plainest and clearest experience, and the other two stand firm upon the clearest deductions our reason can make. If any deist shall say, "how can this be that we are fallen into such a state?" I answer, 1. The question is not how can it be, but is it so? I think I have said enough to clear it is so. 2. Hereby we may see natural religion has its mysteries too, as well as revealed. And I think I have told more, than one of them. 3. If this will not satisfy, then get as much faith and humility, as will teach you to be subject to supernatural instruction, and you may come to understand how it came to be so. If you will not, you must remain in the dark, and there is no help for it.

Now I have laid a plain foundation for an answer to this argument, whereon the deists value themselves so much. It was not because I thought so long an answer needful for the argument: but to make the matter a little more plain, that we have discoursed it at this length. The argument then runs thus: "the wisdom and goodness of God make it necessary that all his creatures should be provided in the means

necessary for attaining the end of their being, and this holds especially as to the rational: but man was made capable of eternal felicity, or this is the end of his being." I need say nothing more to what is subsumed; than has been said above. I answer to the first proposition, be it allowed that God's wisdom and goodness required the rational creature should be provided in the means necessary for the attainment of the end of his being, in his first make and original state: yet neither God's goodness, nor his wisdom, oblige him to restore man, if by his own fault, he has fallen from that state, wherein at first he was made. Now this is the case with man in his present state, as we have told above.

If it is said, this is but our assertion, that man is in a lapsed state, I answer, 1. I think it is more than an assertion, and must do so till I see what I have offered for proof of the foregoing propositions fairly answered. Nay till I see the whole arguments that have heretofore been offered against the sufficiency of natural religion, answered. For, I think they all prove that man at present is in a lapsed state. But 2. I add, that the deists must mind, we are upon the defensive, and it is theirs to prove, that man in his present condition is not so situated as we say. It was *ex abundanti* for clearing of truth, that I condescended to prove this. It was enough to me to have denied that man is now in his original state, and put the proof upon them; in regard they affirm, and the whole stress and force of their argument leans upon that supposition, which we deny.

The second argument on which the deists lay much stress, is drawn from the supposed ill consequences attending our opinion. They pretend that it is horribly cruel to imagine, that all the heathen world were lost. This they inculcate upon all occasions, rather to expose their adversaries, I am afraid, than to confirm the truth. The sum of this argument we see proposed by Herbert in his words above quoted. Where he tells us, that all will own his articles to be good. "Although some oppose them as insufficient to lead to future happiness; but he who says so is not only rash, but ventures upon an opinion, which in my view is at once cruel and harsh in the extreme." The short of the matter is, "If natural religion is not sufficient, we must give all the heathen world for lost, but this is a cruel and harsh assertion, injurious to God, and cruel to such a vast number of men." And here they raise a horrible outcry. With this they begin, and with this end. This argument, although it has no force, as shall be evinced anon, yet makes such a noise at a distance, that a great many ingenuous spirits seem to be mightily affected with it. I conceive therefore it will not be improper to lay open the causes of this, and the rather because they discover where the fallacy of the argument lies, and whence it is that men are so easily prepossessed in this matter. To this purpose then it is to be observed,

I. That there are some things which in themselves are not desirable; to which therefore no uncorrupted rational nature, much less that of God, could incline merely upon their own account: which yet, in some circumstantiate cases, may be every way congruous to justice and righteousness; yea, and worthy of the wise and good God. The torment of any rational creature is not in, or for itself desirable. God has no pleasure in it. The nature of man, if not deeply corrupted, yea, and divested of humanity, recoils at it; yet there is none, who will not allow that in many circumstantiate cases, it is not

only worthy of, but plainly necessary in point of wisdom and justice, for the most merciful of men, to inflict upon their fellow creatures such punishments, as their own natures do shrink at the apprehensions of. Nor can it be denied that the holy God, notwithstanding of, and without prejudice to his infinite goodness, may, nay in some cases must, likewise thus punish his own creatures. Now, if such things are represented as they are, in their own natures, without a due consideration of circumstances and ends inducing to them, it is easy to make them appear not only hard. but odious.

II. However just, righteous, and congruous such actions are; yet he who undertakes to expose them as cruel, barbarous, and hard, especially if he has to do with persons, weak, ignorant, partial in favours of the sufferer, and averse from the author of the torment, has a far more easy task, even though he is of weaker abilities, and employed in defence of the worst cause, than he who undertakes to defend such actions. The reason of this is obvious? All that makes to his purpose, who designs to expose the actions as cruel, lies open in its nature and horror to the thoughts of the most inconsiderate; and if to this he only sets off the representation with a little art, so as to touch the affections, which in this case is easily done, he has carried his point; the judgment is not only deceived, but the affections are so deeply engaged in the quarrel, as to preclude the light of the most nervous and valid defence imaginable. Whereas on the other hand, all things are quite otherwise. The circumstances inducing to such actions, are usually deep, and not so easily discernible, and therefore not to be found out, without much consideration; and when they are found out, they are not easily collected, laid together, and ranged in that order, which is necessary to set the atrocity of the crime in a due light, especially where the persons, who are to judge, are weak and biassed. Besides, the evil of those crimes, being for most part more spiritual, makes not so strong an impression on the affections. And this consideration holds more specially true, where the question is concerning the judgments of God, which proceed upon that comprehensive view, which infinite wisdom has of all circumstances, that accent the evil, aggregate the fault, and enhance the guilt of sins committed against him; many of which circumstances no mortal penetration can reach. And further, this more particularly holds true, where it is not God himself, but man that pleads on behalf of the actings of God. It is very observable to this purpose, that historians of all nations almost condescend upon instances, wherein the sight of severe, but just punishment of atrocious offenders, has not only excited the compassion of the populace or vulgar to the sufferers, but enraged them against the judges; even they, who would have been ready to reclaim against the partiality and negligence of the judge, if the crimes had been passed without just punishment, when they see the punishment inflicted through a fond sort of compassion to the sufferers, complain of the cruelty of the judge, laying aside all thoughts of the atrocity of the crime.

III. Where they, who make it their business to traduce such actions, as hard and cruel, and they also, whom they labour to persuade of this, are interested by alliance, or common interest in the sufferers, are themselves in the same condemnation, or, upon the same and such like accounts, obnoxious to that justice, which adjudges those sufferers to

these torments, which they study to represent cruel and barbarous: it is no wonder to see the representation make such deep impressions, and rivet such a persuasion, that the punishments are cruel and hard, as may not only bias a little against any defence that can be made for the judge, but as even may make them refuse to admit of any apology, or condescend so far as to give any that can be made a fair hearing. But all unbiassed persons must allow, that such can never be admitted judges competent, as to what is just or unjust, hard or otherwise; the case being in effect, their own, and they by this means being made both judge and party.

IV. However great, terrible, and heavy any punishment God is supposed to inflict, may in its own nature appear, or how great soever the number of the sufferers may be, yet we can never, from the severity of the punishment, or the number of the sufferers, disprove its justice; unless we can make it appear, that no circumstances, which can possibly fall under the reach of infinite wisdom, can render such severity towards so many persons, worthy of him. Now, however easy this undertaking may appear to persons less considerate, it will have a far other aspect to such as impartially ponder, that all men are manifestly partial in favour of those of their own race, and in a case which is, or may be their own, and have no suitable apprehensions of the concernment of the divine glory in it, or no due regard for them. Besides, such is their shallowness, that they can neither have under view many important circumstances, that are fully exposed to all-comprehending wisdom, nor can they fully understand the weight, even of these circumstances, they either do, or may, in some measure know.

V. Every man who is wise and just, when either he hears of, or sees any punishment that appears very severe and terrible, must suspend his judgment as to the hardship of it, till the author of it is fully heard as to the inducements, and neither ought he to deny what his eyes see, his ears hear, or he is otherwise informed of, upon sufficient evidence. He is neither to question the matter of fact, nor condemn the judge of cruelty, because of the seeming severity of the punishment. This is a piece of common justice, which every judge, even amongst men, may reasonably claim from his fellow creatures, although his actions and the reasons of them, cannot be supposed to lie so far out of their ken, as those of the divine judgments: much more is it reasonable for men to pay this deference to God, considering how unable the most elevated capacities are to penetrate into all the reasons, which an infinitely wise God may have under view; and there is the more reason for this, since man also is naturally so very apt to be partial in his own favour, and fail of giving a due regard in his thoughts unto the concernments of divine glory.

These observations, as they are in themselves unquestionably true, so they do fully lay open the causes of that general acceptance, which this plea of the deists has obtained with less attentive minds; and how little weight is to be laid upon them. In a word, if they are well considered, they are sufficient to enervate the force of this whole plea. But lest the deists should think their argument slighted, or that the consciousness of our own weakness, makes us choose long weapons to fight with, I shall closely consider the argument. Perhaps what makes a noise, at a distance, will be less frightful if we take a nearer view of

it. We deny that the heathen world had means sufficient for obtaining eternal happiness. The Deists say, that this is cruel and rash. Let us now see whence this may be proven.

I. Doth our cruelty lie in this, that we have laid down an assertion, upon which it follows, that in fact all the heathen world are lost? But now do not the deists own, that in very deed, all impenitent sinners must perish? No doubt they do, who talk so much of the necessity of repentance. Well, are not all who want revelation, guilty of gross sins? Is not idolatry a gross sin? are they not all plunged into the guilt of it? Socrates, the most considerable person for his virtue, that lived before Christ, cannot be excused. He denied his disowning the gods of Athens. He joined in their worship. If this was against his conscience, the more was his fault, and even with his dying breath, he ordered a cock to be sacrificed to Esculapius. Epictetus, the best perhaps among the philosophers who lived after Christ, in his *Enchiridion* enjoins to worship after the mode of the country where we live; and no doubt practised as he taught. Gentlemen, condescend, if ye can, upon one, who was not guilty of gross sins. Did they repent? What evidence bring you of it? That the multitude lived and died impenitent, none dare question. That there was one penitent, none can prove. That the best of them were guilty of gross sins cannot be denied, and there is no evidence of their penitence. Yea, there is no reason to think that they looked upon repentance as a virtue; but much to the contrary. Well, gentlemen, do not your own principles conclude, that the bulk of the heathen world are, in fact, inevitably lost? And that there is but little ground of hope, and great reason to fear, that it fared not much better with the few virtuosi?

II. But doth the cruelty lie in the number of the persons supposed to be lost? No. This cannot be said. For if the cause be sufficient, the number of the condemned makes not the condemnation the more cruel. Besides, let them go as narrowly to work as they can, they are few, very few, for whom they can plead exemption: and their pleas for that handful will be very lame. So that for any thing I see, the deists, in this respect, are not likely to be much more merciful than we.

III. But perhaps the cruelty lies in this, that we suppose them condemned without a cause, or without one that is sufficient. But this we do not, we suppose none to be condemned, who are not sinners against God, and transgressors of a law stamped with his authority, which they had access to know. And were not the best of them guilty of gross sins? What evidence have we of their repentance? Is it not just, even according to the deists' principles, to condemn impenitent sinners? Thus we suppose none condemned, but for their sins.

IV. But perhaps the cruelty lies in this, that we suppose them all equally miserable, Socrates to be in no better case than Nero. But this follows not upon our assertion. None are supposed miserable beyond the just demerit of their sins.

V. Well, perhaps the cruelty lies in this, that we suppose their torments after this life, to be intense in degree, or of a longer continuance than their sins deserve. This we are sure of, that their sins being offences against God, deserve a deeper punishment, than some men can well think of; and that God is just, and will proportion punishments exactly to offences, and have a just regard, as well to the real allevi-

ations as aggravations of every sin. And if God has, in his word, determined that every sin committed against him, deserves eternal punishment, no doubt his judgment is according to truth. We are not judges in the case.

VI. Well, but the rashness and cruelty perhaps lies here, that by our assertion we are obliged to pass a positive and peremptory judgment about the eternal state of all the heathen world, that they are gone to hell, and laid under everlasting punishments, leaving no room for the mercy of God. But to this we say, revelation has taught us, even where there is the justest ground of fear, to speak modestly of the eternal condition of others, and to leave the judgment concerning this to the righteous God, to whom alone it belongs, and who will do no iniquity. That all the heathen world deserve punishment, cannot, without impudence, be denied. That God will pass any of them without inflicting the punishment they deserve, neither revelation nor reason give us any ground to think. That none of them shall be punished beyond their deservings, scripture and reason demonstrate. But in these things our assertion of the insufficiency of natural religion is not concerned. It obliges us to pass no judgment further than this, "That the heathens, and all who want revelation, had no means sufficient to bring them to eternal happiness, and that consequently they had no reason to expect it; and we have no reason to conclude them possessed of it." And in this case we leave them to be disposed of, as to their state, after this life, by the wisdom and justice of God.

VII. But perhaps the cruelty lies in this, that they are supposed to want the means necessary to attain eternal happiness, while yet they are capable of, and exposed to eternal misery for their sins. But 1. How will the deists prove, that God, without a promise, is obliged to give man eternal happiness for his obedience? 2. Since none of them are to be punished beyond the just demerit of their sins, may not God righteously inflict that punishment, whatever it is, their sins, in strict justice, deserve, though he had never proposed a reward, which reason can never prove our best actions worthy of, even though we had continued innocent? But 3. That man, in his present case, has dropped the knowledge of eternal felicity, and the means of attaining it, and is unable to attain it, is owing not to any defect of bounty and goodness of God, much less of justice; but only unto the sin of man, as has been demonstrated in our answer to the foregoing argument, by reasons drawn from the light of nature. Notwithstanding of which, it must still be owned, that nature's light cannot acquaint us, how man fell into his present lamentable condition, as we have above made appear.

VIII. But is it not safer and more modest, may some say, to suppose, that God of his great mercy did, by revelation, communicate to some of the best of the heathens, who improved the light of nature to the greatest advantage, what was further necessary to their salvation, or, at least, to bring them into a state of happiness, of somewhat inferior degree to that which is prepared for Christians. I know many Christian writers of old and of late have multiplied hypotheses of this kind: some have supposed apparitions of angels, saints, nay damned souls and devils; of which stories I am told that Collius discourses at large in the second book of his treatise *De Animabus Paganorum*.* Some tell

* De Cœlesti Hierar. Ch. 9.

us, "That to such of them as lived virtuously, God always at some time or other sent some man or angel savingly to illuminate them." * So the Arcopagites; some tell us of Christ's preaching to them in Purgatory, so Clemens Alexandrinus; some will have them instructed by the Sibylle, † as the same author elsewhere; some talk of their commerce with the Jews, in which way no doubt some of them came to saving acquaintance with God; others say, that upon their worthy improvement of their natural gifts God might and did reveal Christ to them and spirituals, because "to him who has it shall be given," so Arminius; and of this Herbert frequently intimates his approbation, but with an evident contradiction to, and subversion of his whole story about the sufficiency of natural religion. Besides, the bottom of this is a rotten Pelagian supposition of a merit in their good works: and that "to him who has it shall be given," spoken of in another case, after all the pains some are at to stretch it, will not reach this case: and after all we are left in the dark, as to the way wherein they will have supernaturals communicated to them. The late ingenious author of the Conference with a Theist, supposes a place provided for the sober Pagans in another world, wherein they shall enjoy a considerable happiness, Job xiv. 3. of the "many mansions that are in his father's house," to favour his notion. But now as to all these suppositions and others of the same alloy, however their authors may please themselves in them, I think they are to be rejected. Nor is this from any defect of charity to the heathens, but because they are supported by no foundation, either in scripture or reason. However some of them are possible, yet generally speaking, none of them have the countenance so much as of a probable argument. The scripture proof, adduced by that last mentioned ingenious author, has no weight in it. There is no countenance given to it from the context, nor any other place of scripture, and I cannot approve of his boldness in stretching our Lord's words beyond what his scope requires. But these things have been considered at length by others, whom the reader may consult. ‡ All these suppositions are at best but ingenious fancies, wherewith their authors may please themselves, but can never satisfy others. Nor can they be of any advantage to the heathens. I think I have made it sufficiently appear in the foregoing discourse, that they wanted means sufficient to lead them to salvation, and so had no ground to support a reasonable hope of it. It is granted even by those, whose peculiar hypotheses in divinity, lead them to be most favourable to the heathens, that they had not federal certainty of salvation; and for any uncovenanted mercy, of which some talk, I know nothing about it. Scripture is silent. Reason can determine nothing in it; and therefore disputes about it are to be waved. It is unwarrantable curiosity for men to pry into the secrets of God; "Things that are revealed do belong to us." Where revelation stops, we are to stop. Even Herbert himself dare carry the matter no farther than a *may be*; and *what may be, may not be*.

* Strom. Lib. 6. † Nichol. Confer. part. 2. p. 80. ‡ See Anth. Tuckney, Appen. to his Ser. on Acts iv. 12.

CHAP. XIX.

Wherem Herbert's reasons for publishing his books in defence of Deism are examined and found weak.

THE learned Herbert, toward the close of his book *De Religione Laici*, to justify the publication of his thoughts, as to a catholic religion, common to all mankind, mentions seven supposed advantages of this opinion, or so many pleas for deism. What weight there is in them, we shall now consider.

He introduces himself with a protestation that he published not his book with any ill design against Christianity, which he honours with the title of *optima religio*, "the best religion;" but on the contrary says, that he aimed at establishing it, and intended to strengthen true faith.* I shall not dive into his designs; for which he has long ago accounted unto the only competent judge. But of the design, or rather tendency of his books, we may safely judge. And as to this I say, that if it is granted, that the scriptures are the only standard of the Christian religion, which cannot modestly be denied; I shall upon this supposition undertake to maintain against any who will defend him, that his books aim at the utter subversion of the Christian religion, that his principles overthrow entirely the authority of the scriptures, and are not only inconsistent with, but destructive to the essentials of Christianity. And I further add, that this is every where so obvious in his writings, that it will require a strange stretch of charity, to believe our author could be ignorant of it. Our author having told us what was not his design, proceeds next to condescend upon the reasons inducing him to assert this common religion. And,

I. He tells us that he maintains this common religion, "*Quod providentiam divinam,*" &c. Because it vindicates the universal providence of God, God's principal attribute, whose dignity can never be sufficiently supported. Neither do any particular religion, or faith (to give you our author's own words, *Fides quantumvis laxa*) maintain this, so as to represent God's care of all mankind, in providing for them such common principles as those contained in our catholic truths. Here our author teaches two things, and I think them both false. 1. He tells us, that his catholic religion vindicates the universal providence of God, or serves to maintain its honour. This I think false. The foundation of it we have proved to be not only precarious, but false. For we have cleared, that his five articles did not universally obtain; and further, that if they had, they were not sufficient to happiness. Yea our author himself, after he has told us, that the universal providence of God cannot be maintained, unless we suppose him to have provided all his creatures, in the means necessary for obtaining their happiness, next informs us that he has provided man in no other means save these five articles.† And he further tells us in his words above quoted,‡ that he dare not positively say they are sufficient, nor can we be sure of it, since it depends upon God's secret judgments, which we cannot certainly

* Herbert *Relig. Laici*, p. 28. † *Ibid.* p. 1, 4. ‡ *De Rel. Gentil.* p. 207.

know. And we have heard Blount above own,* that deism is not safe unless it be pieced out by some help from Christianity. Well, is this the way our author asserts the honour of divine universal providence, first to tell us, that its honour cannot be maintained without supposing a sufficient religion universally to have obtained, and then to tell us that he is not sure, that ever there was such a religion? Is not this the plain way to bring the universal providence of God in question? Again 2dly, our author teaches, that no particular religion can support the honour of universal providence. This I take to be also false. The Christian religion asserts and proves, that God who has created all things, preserves them, and governs them in a way suitable to their nature and circumstances, and in so far clears the equity of God's proceedings with the heathen world, in particular, as may satisfy sober men. It acquaints us, that God did, at first, provide man in a covenant security for eternal happiness, and in means sufficient for obtaining of it: that man, by his own fault, incapacitated himself for the use of these means, and forfeited the advantage of the covenant security; that God, in justice, hath left the heathen world under the disadvantage of that forfeiture: that during the time he sees meet to spare them, he governs them, in such a way as is suitable to their lapsed state, of which we have spoke before. We confess we are not able to explain all the hard chapters in the book of providence, and solve every difficulty relating thereto; but this affords no ground for the denial either of God's general or special providence. As the difficulties about God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, Eternity, &c. will not justify a denial of these attributes, or the existence of a deity vested with them; so neither will the difficulties about providence justify a refusal of it; and if this vindication of providence fail of giving satisfaction, I am sure Herbert's will never satisfy.

What our author adds about his *Fides quantumvis laxa*, which he supposes some to stand up for, and maintain as a sufficient religion, I do not well understand. But yet since this expression is very oft used in the writings of this author, in reproach of particular religions, especially the Christian, which lays the greatest stress upon faith, it cannot be passed without some remark. That which our author seems to intend by this *Fides quantumvis laxa*, or "faith how lax so ever it be," is a "Faith that consists in a general assent to the truth of the doctrines, without any correspondent influence upon practice." And he would bear us in hand that the Christian religion, or, at least, Christians, do reckon this sufficient to salvation. This is a base and disingenuous calumny. And our author could not but know it to be such, if he was acquainted either with the scriptures or the writings and lives of that set of Christians against whom this calumny is particularly levelled, who unanimously teach, that the faith that is available is that which works by love, and is to be found only in them, who are created in Christ Jesus to good works. If Herbert was a stranger to the one or the other, he was the unmeetest person in the world to set up for a judge and censurer of them.

II. The next advantage that Herbert condescends on, of his catholic religion, is, "Quod probam facultatum homini insitarum conforma-

* Orac. of Reas. p. 87.

tionem, usumque doceat. Nulla enim datur veritas catholica, quæ non in foro interno describitur, vel non illuc saltem necessario reducitur.*" That is, "This alone teaches man the due use and application of his faculties." But this is only our author's assertion. Christianity is no less consistent with the due use of our faculties and their application to their proper objects, than our author's religion. It destroys none of them, lays none of them aside, and violates none of them; but restores, improves, and elevates them to their most noble and proper use.

Our author adds, for a confirmation of his assertion. "that there is no catholic verity, but what either is inscribed in the mind or what may be reduced to some innate truth." Whether there is any verity inscribed in the mind in our author's sense, I question. Mr Locke has proven,† that there is none such, and in particular has evinced that our author's five articles are not innate truths, no, nor according to the description he himself gives of such notices. He examines the characters of innate truth given by our author, and undertakes to show them not applicable to his five articles.

III. Our author tells he embraced this catholic religion, "Because it distinguishes between things disputable and indisputable," &c. It is needless to repeat all our author's words here. What he says is in short this, "that particular religion" (and here he must be understood to speak particularly of christianity) "contains austere and frightful doctrines that prejudice some men of squeamish stomachs at all religion," (and is it to be wondered at, that men, who have no heart to any religion, are disgusted easily?) but our author has provided them of one that will not offend the most nice and delicate palate, as consisting of principles universally agreed to; which he supposes such persons will readily close with, and so retain some religion, whereas otherwise they would have none.

Here our author evidently designs a thrust at the christian religion, and insinuates, that it is stuffed with austere and horrid doctrines. I know full well what are the doctrines he particularly aims at. The doctrines concerning the corruption of man's nature, the decrees of God, the satisfaction of Christ, are particularly intended. But if these doctrines are considered as delivered in the scriptures, or taught by christians, according to the scriptures, what is here offensive in them? what horrid or frightful? I do indeed grant, that some christians, through their weakness, without any ill design, have so represented, or rather misrepresented some of these points, particularly concerning the decrees of God, as to give offence to sober persons of all persuasions. But as to this, they, and they only, are to bear the blame. As for the doctrines, what have they done? Must the fault of the professors be cast on the religion they profess? This no reasonable man will allow to be just.

I do likewise acknowledge, that whereas, there are different sentiments among christians concerning some of these points; and some of the contending parties have so unfairly stated and foully mis-represented the opinions of their opposers, in the disguise of imaginary consequence, or consequences, at least, denied and abhorred by the maintainers of the opinions they oppose, as to give some unbrage to this, startle weak

* Herbert, Rel. Laici, p. † Locke, Essay of Hum. Unders. Book 1. chap 3. p. 28. § 15. 16. 17. 18. 19.

men, and prejudice them against religion. This they do to expose their adversaries, and fright others from the reception of their sentiments. For such I can make no excuse. The practice itself is scandalously disingenuous, and can admit of no reasonable vindication, and so fair an occasion being given, I cannot pass it without a remark. A notable instance of this sort I meet with in a book, just now come to hand. The ingenious author of the Short method with the deists, in a letter directed to Charles Gildon, newly recovered from deism, cautions him against the dissenters; and to enforce his caution presents him with such an account of their opinions, as is indeed suited to fright the reader. He tells him that they maintain, "that God sees no sin in the elect, let them live never so wickedly. They damn the far greatest part of the world, by irreversible decrees of reprobation, and say, that their good works are hateful to God; and that it is not possibly in their power to be saved, let them believe as they will, and live never so religiously. They take away free will in man, and make him a perfect machine. They make God the author of sin, to create men on purpose to damn them;—they make his promises and threatenings to be of no effect, nay, to be a sort of burlesquing, and insulting those whom he has made miserable, which is a hideous blasphemy."* But to what purpose is all this said? 1. Did not the writer know that this is not a representation at all of the opinions maintained by the dissenters, but of the consequences tacked to them by their adversaries? Does he not know, that they detest and abhor these positions as much as he does, that they refuse these to be consequences of them? Is it then candid to offer that as their opinions, which they abhor, and which they will not allow to follow upon their opinion? Again, 2. Doth not this gentleman know that the principles, to which he has tacked these consequences, are the very doctrines, taught in the articles of the Church of England, unanimously maintained by all the great men of that church, till bishop Laud's days, which were preached by them in the pulpit, taught in the schools, and upon all occasions avouched as the doctrine of the Church of England; and, as such, to this very day are owned by no inconsiderable number of that church? With what justice then or ingenuity can he call this the doctrine of the dissenters? 3. From whom does he expect credit to this disingenuous account of the dissenters' opinions? Such as know them, will believe nothing upon the reading of this passage; but that the writer either understood not the opinions he undertook to represent, or that against his light, he misrepresented them, and so is never to be credited again, without good proof, in any thing he says of them. 4. Was it the author's design to gain a proselyte to the opposite opinions? This I believe was it. But this is the most unlucky way of management in the world; for if his disciple is a man of sense, he will be shy of believing that such monstrous opinions can be received by a body of men, among whom, there must be owned by their worst enemies, to be not a few learned and sober. And if he find himself abused upon search, may he not be tempted, not only to reject this account, but all that he received upon the same authority? When persons of sense, who have been abused, are undeceived, they are wont ever after to incline to favourable thoughts of the persons and principles they were prejudged against; and to suspect that cause of weakness, which cannot be supported, but by such mean and unman-

* Letter subjoined to the Deist's Manual, p. 22, 23.

ly shifts, as this, of misrepresenting the opposite opinion. 5. If the adverse party shall take the same course, what a fine work shall we have? And to speak modestly, they want not a colourable pretence for a retortion. But who shall be the gainers? Neither of the contending parties surely: for men will never be beat from their opinions by calumnies that they know to be unjust. None will gain, save they, who are lying at the catch, for pretences to countenance them in the rejection of the christian religion. It is none of my business to debate this controversy with this author.

If he has any thing new to advance upon these heads, let him advance it, he will find antagonists in the Church of England, able perhaps to cope with him, though the dissenters should fail. This gentleman had managed his oppositions with more modesty and ingenuity, if he had attentively perused the learned Bishop of Sarum's discourse on the 17th article of the Church of England. But I hope this author, upon second thoughts, when his passion is over, will be ashamed of what he has written.

But now to return to Herbert and the deists, if we abstract from these two abuses, and consider the doctrines of Christianity as represented in the scriptures, or according to them, there is no ground to charge them with any thing frightful, or of ill consequence to religion. Yea I dare be so bold as to say, that if practical religion, consisting in godliness, righteousness and sobriety, is any where to be found in the world, it is to be found amongst those, as readily as any where else, and in as eminent a degree, who have been trained up in the belief, and under the influence of those very doctrines, which some, and particularly Herbert, would persuade us to be so horrid, as to fright men at once out of their wits and religion. If it be said, that this is not owing to the influence of these principles,—I answer, this, at least, proves those principles not inconsistent with practical religion, inasmuch as they who believe them, are eminent in it; and, if we inquire of them, what has influenced their walk, they are ready to attest, that the belief of these very truths has had the principal influence upon that effect; and to offer a rational account of the tendency of these doctrines to promote practical religion.

Now, we have wiped off the insinnated reproach, designed by our author, against the Christian religion. Let us next consider what there is in this plea. He tells us, his religion consists of incontroverted articles, and so will fright no body. But 1. This is not true in fact, as we have demonstrated above. His articles have been controverted. The sufficiency of them has been believed by very few. Again, 2. Will our author say, that nothing is necessary to religion, which is controverted? Will the deists undertake this point? If so, their religion is lost, as is evident from what has been demonstrated above. 3. This no more proves our author's five articles to be a sufficient religion, than it proves one of them alone to be such. He who owns no more in religion, but this only, "there is a God," may as well plead, that religion retains only what is incontrovertible. But the deists will say, there are other points necessary. Well, does not this give me an answer to their argument, when I say there are other points necessary besides these five articles. 4. Whereas he would bear us in hand, that no man will scruple his religion, is not this enough to make any reasonable man shy of admitting it, that its author and inventor dare not say positive-

ly that it is sufficient to answer the purpose, for which it is designed, and that others undertake to demonstrate, that if it be trusted to, it will prove a soul-ruining cheat? In a word it is not worth the while to calculate a religion for those, who will admit nothing in religion, but what is incontroverted: for, in short, they are for no religion. And I think we have in particular evinced, that our author's five articles will be too hard in digestion for such delicate stomachs.

IV. Our author tells us, he embraced the catholic religion, "*Quod concordiaë communis substructionem agat,*" &c. That is, in short, let all the world agree to the sufficiency of our author's five articles, and leave all other things to be rejected or received, as trifles, not necessary to be disputed about, and then there is an end of all the contests, then there is a foundation laid for everlasting peace, and the golden age will be retrieved, This trifle deserves rather pity than an answer. What, will all the world agree that this religion is sufficient, while its inventor durst not say so?

V. He embraced it, "*Quod auctoritatem majestatemque indubiam religioni, et Hierarchiæ inde Politicæque conciliat,*" &c. That is, "Because it conciliates respect to religion, to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and civil government." Religion will be respected, when it requires nothing but what is necessary. Church and state will be respected when it punishes nothing but transgressions against incontroverted articles.

But is not this to trifle with a witness? The weakness of this plea is so obvious, that I may well spare my pains in exposing it. Will it maintain the dignity of religion to confine it to a number of articles, which, for any thing we know, or the deists know, may cheat us of our reward in the end, since they cannot positively assure us of its sufficiency, and we are positively sure it is not sufficient? Will it maintain the honour of church-officers, to admit a religion, which subverts the very foundation of all respect to them, viz. The divine institution of their order? As for the advantage of it to the civil government, the deists may offer it to the consideration of the next parliament, and they will consider whether it is proper to conciliate respect to the civil government.

VI. Our author embraced his religion, "*Quod adeo non molliat religionem, ut ejus severitatem stimulum addat.*" That is, "It is so far from favouring liberty in sin, that it urges harder to virtue, severe virtue, than revealed religion." There is no hope of pardon here upon the satisfaction of another. Men must work for their life, and when they fail, they must satisfy by their repentance. Well, but do they who teach the necessity of satisfaction, exclude repentance? And if they make both satisfaction and repentance absolutely necessary, though each in its order and place, to forgiveness, methinks they will yet have the advantage in point of severity. Again, but what if repentance will not satisfy? If this is so, and our author seclude all other satisfaction, will not his religion lead men rather to despair than to virtue.

VII. Our author's last inducement was, "*Quod sacramentum literarum fini ultimo intentionique quadret,*" &c. That is, "Because this catholic religion answers the ultimate design of the scriptures." All the doctrines taught there level at the establishment of these five catholic verities as we have oft hinted; there is no sacrament, right, or ceremony, there enjoined, but what aims (or seems to aim) at the establishment of these five articles.

But is not this a notable jest? Our author would bear us in hand, That his religion answers the great ends of the scriptures, better than that religion, which the scriptures themselves teach. If our author says not this, he says nothing. If the end of the scriptures is not good, it is not for the honour of our author's religion that it agrees with it. If it is good, and the religion taught in the scriptures themselves, answer their own design best, why then, I would choose that religion, and leave our author to enjoy his own. If he says, his answers it better, then I would desire to know where the compliment lies, that he designed to the scriptures. But I desire to know further of the deists, whether do the scriptures teach any thing, besides these articles, to be necessary? Where do the scriptures tell that these are sufficient? Are divine institutions, sacraments, &c. necessary towards the compassing of the ends of religion? If there are not, how does it commend our author's religion, that it quadrates with the design of these institutions? If they are necessary and useful, this catholic religion is at a loss that wants them. I am sensible our author has cautioned against this, when he tells us, that they either do, or seem to aim at this. I see "old birds are not caught with chaff." Now I have found it. This catholic religion will really serve the purpose, that revealed truths and institutions do only seem to aim at. But, after all, this is but say and not proof. And I will undertake to evince, against all the deists under heaven, that the confinement of religion to these five articles, as taught by the light of nature, is not only not compliant with the principal intendment of the scriptures, but inconsistent with it.

Thus I have considered the inducements which led Herbert to embrace his catholic religion, and found them wanting. And I must say, if this noble author had not been straitened by a bad cause, that is not capable of rational defence, his learning, which was very considerable, could not but have afforded him better pleas. Charles Blount, in the close of his *Religio Laici*, tells us, it was for the same reasons he embraced deism, and copies after Herbert with some little variety. What he has, that our author has taken no notice of, in this place, will occur in the next chapter, where they are again repeated under another form. "Men that have little to say have need to husband it well, and make all the improvement of it they can."

CHAP. XX.

Wherein the Queries offered by Herbert and Blount, for proving the sufficiency of their five articles, are examined.

THE learned Herbert, in an appendix to his *Religio Laici*, moves some objections against himself, but fearing, after he has said all he can, some may remain unsatisfied still, he betakes himself to another course, and essays to dispute his opposers into a compliance with his sentiments by queries. Of this sort he proposes seven. Charles Blount concludes his *Religio Laici* in the same method, with this difference, that he has added other seven queries, making in all fourteen, and prefixed this title, "queries proving the validity of the five articles."

The arguments couched in these queries, in so far as they tend to evince the sufficiency of this catholic religion, are not new, but materially the same, which we have formerly considered. The method is indeed different, more subtile, and better suited to their great design. Direct proofs are less deceiving, and their weakness is more easily discoverable by vulgar capacities. Queries conceal the weakness of arguments, entangle, perplex, and amuse less attentive minds; and by them, the subtile asserters of a bad cause ease themselves of the trouble of proving their ill grounded assertions, which yet, by all rules of disputing, belongs to them only, and turn it over upon the defender. This is enough as to the method, to let us see how suitable it was to their purpose. The queries proposed by Blount are the same with Herbert's and he adds others which Herbert wants. Wherefore we shall consider them as proposed by Mr Blount. But whereas some of them are to more advantage urged by Herbert, we shall offer these in Herbert's words, that we may overlook nothing, which has the least appearance of force in this cause.

Query I. "Whether there can be any other true God, or whether any other can justly be called Optimus Maximus, the greatest and best God, and common father of mankind, save he who exercises universal providence, and looks so far to the good of all men, as to provide them in common and sufficient or effectual means for obtaining the state of eternal happiness after this life, whereof he has implanted a desire in their minds? If the laic or vulgar worship any other God, who does not exercise this universal providence, are they not guilty of false worship or idolatry? And if any one deny this common providence, is he not guilty of treason against the divine majesty, and of a contempt of his goodness, yea, and of atheism itself?"* Thus Herbert. Blount proposes the same query, but more shortly thus, "whether there be any true God, but he that useth universal providence concerning the means of coming to him?†

The design of this query is to prove the necessity of a catholic religion, or a sufficient religion common to all mankind, and to fix the black note of atheism upon all who deny it. The argument whereby this is evinced, is the very same, which we have examined above, as the deists' first and great argument. What is added concerning universal providence, we did consider in our answer to Herbert's first inducement to deism. And so we might entirely pass this query as answered already, were it not for the seeming advantage given to it by this new dress, wherein it appears.

This query has a direct tendency to drive men into atheism, and tempt them to lay aside all worship for fear of falling into idolatry. It is in itself evident, that if God has given all mankind, or to every man means sufficient and effectual to lead them to eternal happiness, they must know of it, at least, there must be easy access for them to know it. With what propriety of speech can it be said, That the means leading to eternal happiness, are given to every man to be by him used for that end, if they know them not, or, at least, if the knowledge of them be not easily accessible to all, who will apply themselves to an inquiry after them? nor is it less evident, that the suitability, efficacy

* Herbert's Relig. Laici, appen. p. 1, 2. † Blount Rel. Laici, p. 90.

and sufficiency of these means, for reaching this end, must be sufficiently intimated to them. If it is not so, how can men rationally be obliged to use means which they do not know to be proper for compassing the end? With what courage or confidence can any rational man with great application, over many difficulties, use, and all his life continue in the use of, means, concerning which he has no assurance, that they will put him in possession of the end? After all his pains he may miss the end he had in view. How can any reasonable soul please itself in such a course? Can it be reasonably thought worthy of the wisdom and goodness of God to give man the means of attaining eternal happiness and means sufficient, and yet leave men in the dark as to the knowledge of this, that they are designed for, and sufficient to reach the end for which they were given? What can rationally induce men in this case, to give God the praise of his goodness, in affording them these means or to use them for that end, for which they were given, if this is hid from them? It is then evident, that if God has afforded all men sufficient means of reaching eternal happiness, they must know this, or, at least, have easy access to know these means, what they are, and what they are designed to, proper for, and will prove effectual to this end. And consequently, if men find not such means after search, they have evidently reason to conclude, That God has left them without them, at least, that they want them in their present circumstances; since after all their inquiries they cannot find them, nor can they discover that any means, they know of, will be effectual to reach this end.

This is evidently the condition of man at present, left to the mere light of nature. We have proved just now, that if God had given these sufficient means, every man must, at least upon application, have had access to know them, and to know that they are sufficient. But, upon application, they find no such matter, and therefore have reason to suspect, that God has not given them these means, if not positively to conclude that they are without them. Herbert himself glories that he was the first who found out what these means were. They had escaped the knowledge and industry of the most learned and diligent before his time. And if so, certainly the vulgar behaved to be at a loss about them. When he has found them, he dare not be positive about their sufficiency: "For which reason, says he, I will not go as far as to say that they are sufficient to bad men to everlasting happiness."* Yea, he more than insinuates, that we cannot come to be positively assured of their sufficiency, and so, must remain in the dark, since the determination of this depends upon the sentiments of God, which are known to none, as he says. Now when a man so learned, so diligent, and so evidently prepossessed with a strong inclination to favour any means that had a share of sufficiency, found so much difficulty to hit upon any such, and did so evidently hesitate about the sufficiency of those he had found; must not the laity, for whom, upon all occasions, he pretends so much concern, hesitate more? Yea, have they not reason evidently to conclude, that there are no such means provided for them?

But Herbert here teaches them, that none is to be acknowledged the true God, nor worshipped as such, who has not provided every man in effectual and sufficient means for attaining eternal happiness. Well

* Herbert, de Relig. Gent. 217.

may the laics say, " I neither know, nor can I ever be satisfied that I have such means ; yea, I have the greatest reason to think that I want them ; if the good God had given them, he would not have mocked me, by concealing them, and so precluding me from the use of them ; he would have pointed me to them, and intimated their sufficiency, so as to make it knowable to me, upon application, without which he could never expect that I should use them ; I have therefore reason to conclude myself destitute of them, and so I will worship no God, since there is none that has provided me in the means necessary to eternal happiness : for if I should, I would be guilty of worshipping one, who is an idol, and not the true God." Here we see where this gentleman's principles must inevitably lead the poor laic, either to direct atheism, to worship one, whom he has reason vehemently to suspect to be merely an idol, and not the true God.

Having thus discovered the dangerous tendency of this query, I shall now give a direct answer to it. And to it I say, That the God, who makes man, implants in his child's mind a desire of eternal felicity, intimates to him, that he is made for this end, obliges him, in duty, to pursue this end, under a penalty, in case he fail of it ; and yet denies or leaves his child without the means that are absolutely necessary for compassing it, antecedently to any fault upon the child's part, will scarcely obtain the titles of *Optimus Maximus*, great and good, or a common father.

But the God, who made man perfect, in his original state, and put him in full possession of all the means, that were necessary to obtain that end, whatever it was, for which he was made, and which he was in duty obliged to pursue, loses not his interest in, and unquestionable right to, the title of *Optimus Maximus*, great and good ; nor does he cease to be a common father, and to act the part of such a one, if, when his children, contrary to their duty, have rebelled against him, by their own fault dropped the knowledge of the end, for which they were made, lost the knowledge of the means, whereby it is to be obtained, put themselves out of a capacity of using the means, or reaching the end, if, I say, in this case, he leave them to smart under the effects of their own sin, and treat them no more as children, but as rebels, who can blame him ? Does he not act every way as it becomes one, who by the best of titles is not merely a father, but the sovereign ruler and governor of all his creatures, to whom of right it belongs to render a just recompense of reward to every transgressor ? Now, this is the case, as we have already proven. If the deists will make their argument conclude, they must prove that this is not the case with man. And when we see this done, we shall then know what to say. Till then, we are not much concerned with their query. If they say, " how can this be ?" Can men by the light of nature know how this came to pass ? I answer, that is not the question, how it came to be so ; but whether, in fact, it be so ? That it really is thus, is before proven. The heathens have confessed it. And though we should never come to be satisfied, how it came about, yet that it really is so, is enough to acquit God.

Nor is God's universal providence hereby everted, he still governs all mankind suitably to their condition. He rules those, whom of his sovereign and undeserved grace, he has seen meet to deal with, in order to return to his family, in a way of infinite mercy and grace. He

governs the rest of the world, whom, in his sovereign and adorable justice and wisdom, he hath left to lie under the dismal consequences of their own sin, in a way becoming their state. He provides them in all things, that do necessarily belong to the ends for which they are spared. Further, he leaves himself "not without a witness as to his goodness in that he does good, gives them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." Which is sufficient to show his superabundant goodness, that reaches even to the unthankful and evil, and gives them ground to conclude, that their want of what is further necessary, flows, not from any defect of goodness on his part, but from their own sins, of many of which their own consciences do admonish them. If God vouchsafe the means of recovery to any, they have reason to be thankful to sovereign grace. If God give not what he may justly refuse, who can in justice complain of him? They must leave their complaint upon themselves and acquit God. And while man is continued in being, it will still remain his indispensable duty to worship this God, who made him, spares him, notwithstanding of his sins, for a time, punishes him less than his iniquities deserve, and confers many other undeserved favours on him. Nor is he guilty of worshipping an idol in doing so.

Thus we have answered this query. And I might now propose to the deists a counter query, whether they, who make that necessary to the support of the universal providence of God, his goodness, and consequently his being, of which no man can be sure that it really is, which all men have reason to believe is not, and which most men, who have made it their business to consider the case seriously, do firmly believe not to be in being, may not reasonably be suspected to design the overthrow of these attributes of God, and consequently of his very being? Thus Vaninus endeavoured to establish atheism. He ascribes such attributes to God, and endeavoured to fix such notions of his perfections, as could not be admitted, without the overthrow of other perfections, unquestionably belonging to him, or owned in any consistency with reason and experience. For he well knew, that if once he could bring men to believe God to be such a one, if he was, they would be brought under a necessity of denying that there was any God.

Query II. "Whether these means appear universally otherwise, than in our aforesaid five catholic articles?"*

These gentlemen think they have by their first query sufficiently proved, that there must be a catholic religion; now they will prove theirs to be it. But I have overthrown the foundation, and so the superstructure falls. I have evinced, that there is no such catholic sufficient religion by reason and experience. I have proved, that the pretence of its being necessary to support the notion of God's providence and goodness, can never possibly persuade any considerate man, to believe, against his reason and experience, against the sight of his eyes, and what he feels within himself, that he really is in possession of a sufficient religion, without revelation; and consequently, that the urging of this pretence can serve for nothing, if not to make men question the goodness and providence of God, and so his very being, to the overthrow of all worship and religion. I have moreover made it appear, that these

* Blount Rel. Laici, p. 90. Herb. Rel. Laici, Append.

five articles are not catholic, and, though they were so, yet are not sufficient.

Query III. "Whether any thing can be added to these five articles or principles, that may tend to make a man more honest, virtuous, or a better man? So Blount.† To this query Herbert adjects a clause, viz. provided these articles be well explained in their full latitude." And is not this the principal end of religion?

By the foregoing queries the deists think they have proved the necessity of a catholic religion, that their five articles is this catholic religion. By this query they pretend to prove their religion sufficient. To this purpose they tell us, that their five articles are sufficient to make a man virtuous, honest, and good; that this is the principal end of religion; and that nothing can be added to them, which can be any way helpful as to this end. If by making a man virtuous, honest, and good, they mean no more than the heathens meant by these words, who took them to intend no more, but an abstinence from the more gross outward acts of vice, contrary to the light of nature, with some regard in their dealings among men, to the common and known rules of righteousness, and usefulness: If, I say, this is their meaning, which I conceive it must be, then I deny that this is the principal end of religion. No man that understands what religion means, will say it. The heathens were influenced to this by other motives, than any thing of regard to the authority of the one true God. Their ethics, which enjoined this goodness, virtue, and honesty, pressed it by considerations of a quite different nature. Of God's legislature, his laws are such they took little or no notice, as we observed from Mr Locke before; and therefore whatever usefulness among men there was to be found in their virtues, they had nothing of religion, properly so called, in them.

But if by making a man honest, virtuous, and good, they mean the making of him inwardly holy, and engaging him in the whole of his deportment, in both outward and inward acts, to carry, as becomes him, toward God, his neighbour, and himself, with a due eye to the glory of God, as his end, and a just regard to the authority of God, as the formal reason of this performance of duty in outward and inward acts: If, I say, they take their words in this sense, I do own this to be one of the principal ends of religion. But then I deny that ever any man, by their five articles, as taught by the light of nature, or by any others of the like kind, known only by the mere light of nature, was in this sense, since the entrance of sin, made virtuous and good. Nay, the moral heathens were not led to that shadow of virtue and goodness, which they had, in the sense before mentioned, from any regard to these five articles, as they are articles of religion; that is, as they are principles directive as to the duty, which man owes to the one, only, true, and supreme Being. And taking virtue, goodness, and honesty in this last sense, which is that alone wherein we are concerned, I have above proven the light of nature, and particularly these five articles, as known by it, utterly insufficient to make any man virtuous, honest, and good. And I have demonstrated not one, but many things beside what is contained in these five articles, however explained to the utmost advantage that can be done by mere unassisted reason, to be absolutely necessary to the ends of religion.

† Ibid. p. 91. Herb. Rel. Laici. Appendix.

Nor will what Herbert has adjected mend the matter, viz. "that his articles must be well explained in their full latitude." These words, if they have any sense, it is this, it is not enough to believe and receive our articles, as in general proposed. This will make no man good. He must not only, for instance, agree to it, that there is one supreme God, and that he is to be worshipped by a virtuous life; but he must be acquainted with all the attributes of this God necessary to be known, in order to the direction of his practice, and he must understand and be fixed as to the nature, measure, and all other necessary concerns of these virtues, that belong to his duty. This is undeniably the meaning of this expression, and this inevitably overthrows all that our author has been building. Were these five articles, in this latitude, universally agreed to? Our author knew the contrary. If any man should assert it, it were enough to make him be hissed off the stage, as either brutishly ignorant of the world, or impudently disingenuous. Well then, our catholic religion is lost. Again, since the explications belong as much to our author's religion as the articles themselves, (for without them he confesses the articles not sufficient) how shall the poor laity ever be satisfied about them? Have there not been as many, and as intricate disputes about them, as about the articles of revealed religion? Where is now the boasted of agreement? Where is the uncontroverted religion? What attribute of God has not been questioned, disputed, and denied? Have not his creation of all things, his providence, &c. which of all others have the most remarkable influence upon practice, by many been denied? Have not horrid notions of them been advanced by some? What will now become of men of squeamish stomachs, that can admit of no religion, but one that is smooth, and has no rugged controversies in it? Why, poor gentlemen, they must part with our author's religion, and so be, what they were before, men of no religion. Upon the whole we see that this query, designed to prove the Deists' religion sufficient, has proven it a chimera.

Query IV. "Whether any things that are added to these five principles from the doctrine of faith, be not uncertain in their original?"* So Blount. Herbert to this adds, "that though God is true, yet the laics can never be certain about revelation: for, says he, how do you know that God spake these words to the prophets? How do ye know that they faithfully repeated or wrote what God spoke to them, and no more? How do ye know that transcribers have performed their part faithfully? How do ye know, that that particular revelation made to a particular priest, prophet or lawgiver, concerns not only all other priests and lawgivers, but also the laics? Especially, how shall ye know this, if the matter of revelation require you to recede from reason?"† Thus he. And here we have a proof of the fourth reflection of his unfair treatment of the Christian revelation, which we made above, chap. 13. For either he insinuates, that the scriptures teach things contrary to reason; and if so, where was our author's ingenuity when he called it the best religion, and upon other occasions pretended so much respect to it? Does not this justify our charge of disingenuity against him, in the first reflection we have made, in the place now referred to? If he owns, that this is not the fault of the Christian religion, but of other

* Blount Rel. Laici, p. 91.

† Herbert Rel. Laici, Appendix, p. 3.

pretended revelations; then he justifies our fourth reflection, wherein we charge him with jumbling revelations, true and false, together, that have, at least, seemingly fair pretences, and these that have none, and deceitfully charges upon all *in cumulo*, the faults peculiar to the worst. If this is not enough to persuade you to the truth of his protestation above mentioned, viz. That he designed no hurt to the Christian religion, he has an observation with which he concludes this query, that will beat the persuasion of it into your brains, or else of somewhat beside, and it is this in his own words: "I think it worthy of the laics" observation, that there is this difference betwixt the pretended revelations offered to us, by the lawgivers, and those offered to us by priests, interpreters of the oracles of God, (under which notion he takes in all prophets) whether they gave their revelations or responses for hire or merely to set off their own conceits (*sive venales, sive nugivendi*;) that the revelations, which the lawgivers pretended they had from heaven, and promulgated as such, did usually make the people more just and sociable, or agree better together; whereas the pretended revelations of the priests and prophets, of whatever sort (or in his own words *Oraculorum interpretibus sive venalibus sive nugivendis*) did usually make the people more unjust or impious, and did divide them among themselves."*

Here is a rare observation, worth gold to the laic. He may, with more safety, receive and use the laws, which Lycurgus, Solon, and the other heathen lawgivers pretended they had from heaven; and I would add Moses to his writings, but that I fear our author has cast him, because he set up for an interpreter of God's mind, and, upon some extraordinary occasions, acted the part of a priest. Our author, I say, will persuade him, that he may, with more advantage, read these writings, than those of the prophets and apostles, or any other of the sacred writers, who were not lawgivers. It is true, both are to be looked upon but as pretended revelations, and so, in effect, cheats: but the lawgivers beguiled the people to their advantage: whereas those rogues for priests, and others who joined with them, offered cheats that were hurtful to justice among men, and the peace of society.

If any say, I am wresting our author's words, and that certainly his comparison respects only the heathen lawgivers and heathen priests, I answer, if this is the meaning, it is altogether impertinent to the design of the query, which avowedly aims at this, that laics living among us (for I don't believe our author designed to send his book to the pagans) can never be satisfied as to the truth of any particular revelation, and all his subordinate queries do directly thrust at the scriptures; and then he closes with this observation, as of the greatest moment to the intendment of the query. And therefore I cannot own, that I have done any injury to our author, in the interpretation I have given of it; but I have spoke his meaning more plainly, than he thought it convenient to do. The next query is to the same purpose, and therefore we shall propose it, and answer both.

Query V. Supposing the originals true, whether yet they be not uncertain in their explications, "so that unless a man read all authors, speak with all learned men, and know all languages, it be not impossible to come to a clear solution of all doubts?" † Thus Blount. Her-

* Herbert, Rel. Laici, Ap. † Blount Rel. Laici, ubi supra, p. 91.

bert, in his fifth query, speaks to the same purpose, he makes a huge outcry about the schisms and sects that are among us, and tells us plainly, that if we will adhere stiffly to revelation, we must, of necessity, get an infallible judge, to whose decisions we must submit in all things. He endeavours to prove that the scriptures will not decide the controversy; and impertinently enough labours to disprove what none ever asserted, that miracles wrought by the writers will not decide the differences about the meaning of their writings. For it is evident the query only respects the meaning of the revelation, as the former did its original. However, I know who will thank our author, for asserting the necessity of a living infallible judge. If any think I have wronged our author, as to this, let them inspect his book, and they will find I have done him justice. But for the satisfaction of those who have it not. I shall subjoin his own express words: he informs the laic, that he can never be satisfied about the meaning of this revelation, about which there are so many controversies, unless either he can “Learn all languages,—read all the more celebrated writings—consult the more learned also who have written nothing,—or that some one by common consent may be appointed an infallible judge of all these controversies.”—And then he goes on to prove, that there is no other possible way of deciding these differences, and coming to the meaning of revelation; but on these two ways pointed at, in the words now quoted. The first is ridiculous, and therefore we must be deists or papists.

The design of these queries is obvious. They were afraid that their arguments might prove weak, which they had advanced for the sufficiency of their catholic religion; and now, in effect, they tell the laics, that if they have a mind to have a religion at all, they must close with this, which the deists present them. And though we cannot satisfy you, may the deists say, in all points, about our catholic religion: yet you must rest satisfied with it: for you can never be sure about revelation, either as to its original or meaning. Men brought to such a strait, since they cannot have such a religion as they would wish, must take such as they can get.

These queries directly attack revelation; and so belong not to our subject. The learned defenders of revealed religion have considered those trifles, and repelled the force of them. I shall only consider them, in so far as they belong to our subject, and offer the few following animadversions upon them.

1. I say, if the laic must, for the sake of those difficulties, quit revealed religion; he must part with the Deists' catholic religion, upon the same account. Herbert has told us, and it were indeed ridiculous to say the contrary, that this catholic religion is comprehensive not only of their five articles, but their explications. Now, are there not as many, and no less intricate debates about this religion, than about that which is revealed? is not its sufficiency disputed? Must not the laic read all books, converse with all learned men, &c. before he can rest satisfied in it? Are there not intricate and perplexed disputes about the authority, extent, use, matter and manner of the promulgation of the law of nature? Where shall the laic find the notices that belong to this religion? Shall he turn inward, and find them inscribed upon his own mind? So our author advises. But learned men say, and pretend to prove the contrary. And if most laics look into their own mind,

they will either say, with the latter, that they are not there; or complain that they are become so dim, that they cannot read them, unless some charitable deist will afford them his spectacles. But when they have got them, what shall they do next for the explications? Are the explications written there too? The deists dare not say it. But these likewise are necessary, say the deists, as we have heard from Blount and Herbert before. Shall the laics consult the doctors about their meaning? But do not doctors differ? Do not the Magi, and not a few learned Greeks, as Zeno and Chrysippus, &c. teach sodomy to be lawful? Was it not the judgment of others, that a wise man ought "to steal and commit adultery and sacrilege upon occasions, for none of these things are by nature evil." So Theodorus, as Hesychius Illustrius reports in his life. Do not Aristippus and Carneades, with many others, overthrow the whole law of nature, telling us, that nothing is naturally just or unjust, good or evil, but by virtue of some arbitrary law? Has not the same opinion been revived, broached and inculcated by Hobbs and others among ourselves? Has not Plato long since observed in his Phædon, "That if any one name either silver or iron, presently all men agree what it is that is intended; but if they speak of that which is just or good presently we are at variance with others, and among ourselves." In a word, he that will cast at revelation, for its controversies, is a fool to go over to natural religion, in expectation to be free of controversy. Thus we are at least upon a level with the deists.

2. If the laic, in Defiance of the deists' queries, may reach a satisfying assurance of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, where is then the necessity for his quitting revelation? It will quite vanish. This, I say, he may have, without troubling his head about impertinent queries of this sort, if he duly attend to that one plain and rational direction given by our Lord, Jo. vii. 17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

The Scriptures containing a full account of all the concerns of the christian religion, are exhibited to him, and put in his hand by the church as a revelation from God, wherein all his concerns for eternity are wrapped up. I do not plead, that the testimony of the church is a sufficient ground for bottoming his faith. But this I say, that the testimony of the church is a sufficient ground for any man to judge and conclude firmly, that its pretensions are not contemptible, and that it deserves the most serious consideration imaginable. But when I speak of the church, whose testimony this regard is to be payed to, we set aside, as of no consideration, a multitude of persons, whether of the clergy or laity, who do, in their practice, visibly contradict the confessed rules of their religion. Such persons are scarce to be reckoned of any religion, and their testimony is of no consideration, either for or against religion. Nor do we restrict the notion of the church to the representatives of it, much less to the church of Rome, that monopolizes this name. But I take for that body of men, of whatever station or quality, who have received and do act answerably to the Christian religion they profess, in some good measure at least. Now I say, the testimony of this church or body of men, deserves great regard in this matter. If we consider them, there are among them persons of unattainted reputation, enemies themselves being judges. Not a few of them are of unquestionable judgment, deep discerning, solid learning, and strict inquiries after

truth. They are not a few but many. Nor are they confined to one nation or age, but such there have been, in all ages, in all nations, where christianity has obtained free access. Many of them are persons, whom envy itself cannot allege biassed, by external gain of one sort or of another. They are persons of different, nay cross civil interests, and of different outward conditions; such are the persons who give this testimony. Again, if we consider their testimony, they bear witness to the christian religion in all its concerns, its truth, sufficiency, usefulness to all the ends of religion, with respect to time and eternity, and its efficacy for beginning, carrying on, maintaining, reviving and consummating such as sincerely receive it, in godliness towards God, righteousness towards men, sobriety with respect to ourselves; and that both as to inward principles and outward acts. Further, if we consider in what they give in their testimony, the weight of it will appear. They bear witness to all this, not only by their words, but by their deeds, living in a conformity to it, parting with all that is dearest to them for it, cheerfully undergoing the greatest hardships, patiently undergoing the most cruel torments, to the loss of life itself; and this they do neither upon mere constraint, nor, on the other hand, from a rash and inadvertent neglect of due regard to the unquestionable advantage of peace, health, life, and the other good things they part with; but they venture upon doing and suffering freely and of choice, upon a sober, rational consideration of the advantage of cleaving to their religion, and of its being such, as will do more than compensate any loss they can sustain for it. Again, they bear witness to the concerns of this religion, as to a thing, that they have not received upon bare hearsay, but upon narrow scrutiny, as that whereof they have the experience. They do not only give this testimony, when it is new to them, but after long trial, when they are most sedate and composed, when they can expect nothing of advantage by it, and when they must lay their account with contempt, opposition and loss. They give this testimony in whatever place they are, where it is honoured, or where it is opposed. They give it with the greatest concern, and recommend this religion to those whom they would least deceive, even with their dying breath, when they dare not dissemble, and that after a long trial, in the course of their lives, in the greatest variety of outward condition, sufficient to have discovered the weakness of their religion, if it had any. They have made choice of this religion, and adhered to it, under the greatest outward disadvantages, who were not prepossessed in its favours, by education, but prejudged against it; and they have embraced it, where they had a free choice to accept or reject it, and advantages to tempt them to a refusal. They do not require an exquisite belief, as Mahometans do, but provoke to experience and trial. Now I dare boldly say, that this testimony is a better, more plain, obvious and every way more justifiable ground of rational assent to the divine authority, truth, efficacy, and sufficiency of the christian religion, than can be given for the like assent, to any other particular religion whatsoever. Nay, there is more, in this one testimony, as it is, or, at least, may be qualified with other circumstances, discernible even by the most ordinary laic, here for brevity's sake omitted, (the urging of this in its full strength, not being my present design) than can be offered for all the other religions in the world, natural, or pretending to revelation, were all that can be said for them al-

together put in one argument. Any reasonable man cannot but think his eternal concerns safer in following this society, than any other whatsoever : there is not such another company elsewhere to be met with, as might be demonstrated to the conviction of the stiffest opposer. But this I plead not at present. I say not, that the laic should build his persuasion of christianity upon this testimony. All that I make of it is this, that the laic has reason to consider the scriptures as thus attested, as a book, that has, at least, very plausible pretences to divinity, a book that deserves serious perusal, a book that cannot possibly have any obvious and unquestionable arguments of imposture, and consequently, that it deserves to be read through, and fully heard before it is cast, and that though there occur in it some things he cannot presently understand, or whose use and value he cannot take up, he ought not therefore to be prejudged against the divine authority of the book upon the account of them, till, at least, it is heard to an end. For, who knows not that things, which appear incredible, unreasonable, yea ridiculous, before their causes, order, and design are understood, may, upon acquaintance with these, appear convincingly credible, useful, and every way reasonable? This is all I claim of the laic at present, and he deserves not the name of a reasonable man who will deny it upon such a ground. And if the deists had considered this, we had not been troubled with the many childish and trifling prejudices, wherewith their Oracles of Reason and other books are stuffed. Nor could they have been diverted from the serious consideration of the Scriptures, by such pitiful exceptions.

Well, the scriptures being put into the laic's hand, thus attested, he sets himself to the perusal of them, and such a perusal as the case requires, looking to God for direction, he tries the means appointed by them, for satisfaction as to their divinity, while he is seeking light from God ; in such a matter he dare not expect it, if he continue in the neglect of known duty, or the commission of known sin, and therefore he studies to avoid them. He is resolved to follow truth, as it is discovered, and to subscribe to the scripture pretensions, if they give sufficient evidence of themselves. Nothing is here resolved, but what is reasonable beyond exception. In pursuance of this just resolution, he reads them, and upon his perusal, what passages he cannot understand, or reach the reason of, he passes at present and goes on, till he see further what may be the intendment of them. And he finds in plain and convincing expressions, his own case, and the case of all men by nature, clearly discovered, and urged upon him by this book ; the words pierce his soul, dive into his conscience, and make manifest the secrets of his heart, known to none but God, manifest his sins, in their nature and tendency, and all their concernments. His conscience tells him, all this is true to a tittle, though he did not know it before, and none other, save the heart-searching God, could know what was transacted within his heart, though overlooked by himself. The discovery not only carries with it an evidence of truth, which his conscience subscribes to ; but the words wherein it is expressed, bear in themselves upon his soul with a light, authority and majesty formerly unknown, evidencing their meaning and truth, and filling the soul with unusual and awful impressions of the majesty and authority of the speaker. Thus being convinced and judged, and the " secrets of his heart made

manifest," he is forced to "fall down and acknowledge, that God is in the word of a truth." And he is ready to say, "Come see a book that told all that ever I did in my life: is not this the book of God?" Thus he stands trembling under the sense of the wrath of God, due to him for his sins. He reads on and finds in the same book a discovery of relief proposed frequently in the same passages. He is urged to an acceptance of it. The discovery carries along with it a full evidence of the suitableness, excellency, and advantage of the remedy; and by a taste of its goodness, or inward sense, he is drawn to an approbation. Upon this approbation, the promised effects follow. His fears are dissipated, his hopes revived, his soul is made acquaint with formerly unknown and God-becoming expressions of the nature and excellencies of God. And going still on, every day repeated experience occurs of the justness of the discoveries the word makes of himself, the authority of its commands, faithfulness of its promises, the awfulness of its threatenings; none of which fall to the ground. He, in a word, has repeated experience of the unparalleled efficacy of the whole, for the cure of his darkness, his corruption, &c. which despised other applications; and towards his advancement to a sincere and conscientious regard to all his duties, outward and inward, toward God and man.

Let us now but suppose this to be the case with the laic, upon his perusal of the scriptures, though with respect to innumerable souls, it is more than a bare supposition: upon this supposition I say, 1. The laic has the highest security he can desire, that this book is as to its substance the very word of God, as certainly as if it were spoken to him immediately by a voice from heaven. This cannot well be denied by any that understands this supposition. 2. I say, the laic thus convinced may laugh at all Herbert's queries as impertinent. He finds God speaking by the word, and owning it for his. He needs not therefore trouble himself who wrote it, or whether they were honest men who transcribed it, or whether they performed their part, whether it was designed for him, and the like may be said of all his other queries. He will find no occasion for that distinction betwixt traditional or original revelation mentioned by Herbert, and insisted upon by Mr Locke, on what design I leave others to judge.* In this case, as to the substance, it is all one to him as if it had not come through another hand, nor has he reason to be jealous, that God would permit to creep into, or stand in a book, which, for the substance, he still owns and evinces to be from him, any thing of a coarser alloy, at least any such corruption as might make it unworthy of him to own it, or unsafe to use it to the design it was given for: yea, he has the strongest security that the perfections and providence of God can afford, to rest fully assured of the contrary. He has no reason to be stumbled at passages he cannot understand, or such as by others are reckoned ridiculous, but rather to say with Socrates in another case, "What I understand, I admire, and am fully convinced to be every way worthy of its author; and therefore I conclude what I understand not, to be equally excellent, and that it would appear so if I understood all its concerns." Finally, this supposition takes off all pretence of hesitation about the mean-

* Locke's Essay of Hum. Understand. book 4. Cap. 18. §. 6, 7, 8.

ing of the scriptures, as to what the laic is particularly concerned in. The story of the necessity of an infallible judge, is built upon this supposition, that the scriptures are so obscure in matters necessarily relating to the faith and practice of the vulgar, that they cannot be understood by them satisfyingly, in the use of appointed means: this supposition is palpably false, contrary to scripture, reason and experience, as is evinced by our writers against the papists, who fully consider their pleas, and particularly those, which Herbert and the deists have borrowed from them, who may be consulted by the reader.

3. Thus far I have made appear, that the laic has the justest reason in the world to look upon it as his duty, or the will of God, that he should give the scriptures such a perusal. 2. That in doing his will there is a way, at least, supposable, wherein he may reach full satisfaction in his own mind, in defiance of the deists' queries about the divinity of the scriptures, and reach the highest rational security, even that of faith, bottomed upon divine testimony and inward sense or experience; which Herbert himself, upon all occasions, truly asserts to be the highest certainty. I shall now advance one step further, and assert, that this is more than a mere supposition, that it is a matter of fact, that they, who do receive the scriptures in a due manner, especially among the laics, or illiterate, do find and rest upon this ground in their persuasion. Upon this ground it was alone, that multitudes did at first receive it, and for it reject they religions they were bred in; and not as the deists imagine, upon a blind veneration to teachers, priests, or preachers, whom, by education, they were taught to abhor: and upon this ground they still do adhere to it, and receive it as written in the scriptures. The words of Mr Baxter, as I find them quoted by Mr Wilson* (for I have not seen Baxter's book in answer to Herbert de Veritate) are remarkable to this purpose. "I think," says he, that "in the very hearing or reading, God's spirit often so concurrereth as that the will itself should be touched with an internal gust or flavour of the goodness contained in the doctrine, and at the same time the understanding with an internal irradiation, which breeds such a sudden apprehension of the verity of it, as nature gives men of natural principles. And I am persuaded, that this increased by more experience and love, and inward gusts, doth hold most christians faster to Christ, than naked reasonings could do. And were it not for this, unlearned, ignorant persons were still in danger of apostasy, by every subtle cavalier that assaults them. And I believe that all true christians have this kind of internal knowledge, from the suitableness of the truth and goodness of the gospel to their new-quickened, illuminated, sanctified souls." The apostle tells us, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." If the deist say, how proves the laic this to me? I answer, that is not the question. For the design of the deists in these queries, is to prove, that the laic cannot be assured about the original and meaning of revelation in his own mind, and so must close with their catholic religion. Now in direct contradiction to this, I say, here is a ground to stand upon. And if he

* Baxter's Animad. on Herbert de Verit P. 135. quoted by M. J. Wilson, Scripture interpreter Assured, Appen. P. 20.

has this ground, even a sober deist must allow he has no reason to be moved from it, but must fully know that the doctrines are of God. And so I have overthrown the design of the query. As for the deist's question, how he proves it to others, it is impertinent. It is not reasonable to expect, that every common man can stop the mouths of gain-sayers. It is enough for him, if he can give a reason, which is good, and must be owned such in itself. If the deist questions matter of fact, that he finds matters so and so; I answer, A blind man may question whether I see this paper now before me; and yet I have good reason to believe it is there, though I should fail of convincing him.

If the deist say, I have perused the scriptures, and found no such effect; I answer, in matters of experience one affirmative proves more than twenty negatives; unless the application is in all respects equal, and the effect depend upon a necessary cause: for where a voluntary agent is the cause of the effect, there it does not always necessarily follow upon the like application. But to wave this general, which would require more room to explain, than I can allow it in this place, I say further to the complainer, have you given the scriptures such a perusal, as I proved in a way of duty, you are obliged to do? Have you used the means, in so far, at least, as is possible for you? Have you sought, have you waited for God's guidance and preservation from mistake, and from unjust prejudices against him, his works, his word, if this be such, and his ways? Do you carefully study to avoid what may reasonably be thought, even by a considerate heathen, to obstruct the grant of the assistance desired from God? Do you carefully avoid known sin? Do you endeavour the performance of what you know to be duty? Are you resolved to follow in practice where light leads? If you dare not frankly answer, you have no reason to complain. For my own part, I am persuaded, that in fact, none who have done his will even thus far, have reason to table a complaint against the word. Others, who take a quite contrary course, are unreasonable in the complaint. Disputes about what might be the case, upon supposition of a person's doing all, that in his present circumstances he is able to do, and yet miss of satisfaction as to the divine authority of the word; until the subject of this question be found, I think not myself concerned in at least a controversy with the deists. It is unreasonable to question the authority of the scriptures or the evidence of it, upon suppositions that never were in being, and I am persuaded never shall have a being.

But these things I leave. This dispute lies wholly out of our road. But I have been obliged to this digression, in pursuit of the impertinent queries of the deists. I say, impertinent, because, were all granted that is aimed at in these queries, it will not avail one rush, towards the proof of the point the deists are on, viz. the validity of their religion; for were revealed religion uncertain, is it a good consequence, that therefore the religion of the deists is certain? What I have said in defence of revealed religion, I would have to be looked upon only as a digression, and not as a full declaration of my opinion; much less would I have this understood as the substance of what can be pleaded on behalf of that blessed book that has "brought life and immortality to light." This is not the hundredth part of what even I could say, were this my subject. And others have said, and can plead much more than I am able. However, this I owed to the truth of God. Such as would see all these

pretences against revelation repelled, are desired to consult those, who designedly treat of this subject.

There are other things in these queries now animadverted upon, that deserve rather contempt than an answer. In particular it is supposed, as one of the principal foundations of those two queries, now under consideration, that a man cannot reach certainty in his own mind upon solid grounds, and rationally acquiesce in it as such, unless "he knows all that can be said against it, read all books, converse with all learned men, &c." than which there is not a more extravagant expression in *Bevis* and *Garragantua*. Admit it, and I shall demonstrate against any who will undertake it that nothing is certain. I cannot but admire that so learned a person as *Herbert* could use such an extravagant supposition. But what will not a bad cause drive a man upon? This confirms what is ordinarily observed, that there is no opinion, however unreasonable, but has some learned man for its patron, if not inventor.

We shall now go on to the rest of the queries which will be of more easy despatch. That I have dwelt so long upon these two, is out of a regard to revelation and its honour, and not from any weight in the queries. As for them, this alone had been a sufficient answer, which I shall propose in way of a counter-query, and conclude with it; If a laic that is illiterate cannot be satisfied as to the truth of revealed religion, how does this prove the five articles of the deists to be a sufficient and good religion?

Query VI. "Supposing all true in their originals, and in their explications, whether yet they be so good for the instructing of mankind, that bring pardon of sin upon such easy terms, as to believe the business is done to our hand? and,

Query VII. "Whether this doctrine doth not derogate from virtue and goodness, while our best actions are represented as imperfect and sinful, and that is impossible to keep the ten commandments, so as God will accept of our actions, doing the best we can?"* Thus *Blount* gives us *Herbert's* sixth Query in two. There is no material defence in *Herbert*, save only that he harps upon the old string, and spends himself in bitter invectives against the Scripture doctrine about the decrees of God, of which we have said enough before, and therefore I think it needless to burden this paper with his words.

The two former Queries struck at Scripture revelation itself, these two strike at the matter contained in the Scriptures. And here there is a double charge laid against the doctrine revealed in the Scriptures, as black as hell can invent, and as false as it is black. The sixth query charges it with favouring sin, by bringing pardon upon too easy terms; and the seventh charges it with derogating from virtue.

For an answer to both, I might oppose experience. Sin is no where by any so opposed. Virtue no where so sincerely cultivated, as among those, who sincerely receive the doctrine of satisfaction, and believe the utmost as to the inability of man in his present fallen case, without supernatural assistance, and gracious acceptance to please God. Dare the deists compare with them in this respect? If they should, I know what would be the issue, if the judge had conscience or honesty. A *Socrates*, *Seneca* or *Plato* deserves not to be named in the same day with the

* *Blount*, *Rel. Laici*. p. 91, 92.

meanest serious christian, that believes these doctrines, either with respect to piety toward God or duty toward man.

But as to the first charge; I say the ground of it is false; the query is disingenuous and deceitful. The ground of it is a supposition, that revelation excludes the necessity of repentance. This is manifestly false; both Herbert and Blount knew it to be false, and could not but do so, if ever they read the Bible. And the query comparing revelation upon this known misrepresentation, with natural religion, shamefully disingenuous. Let the query be, whether it is more favourable to sin to say, it is not to be pardoned without satisfaction to justice by Christ, and repentance upon our part, as revelation teaches; or that upon our repentance merely, God is obliged to pardon it, as the deists say? Now I leave it to the deists to answer this.

As to the second charge, revelation derogates nothing from virtue. It teaches indeed that our best actions are imperfect, and he knows not what perfection means, or what is required thereto, that will deny it. It teaches that "they who are in the flesh cannot please God." It talks at another rate than Herbert of the condition of sinful man, as to acceptance with God. He gives him a direction, "Cum bonum pro virili præstas, mercedem a bonitate illa suprema pete, exige, habe; quo pacto, revera sapies."* That is, "manfully perform your duty as you can," (and whatever sin remain) "ask, demand, and have your reward; this is the way to be truly wise." This petulant advice the Scripture doth not justify, and sober reason reprobates. Where sin intervenes, whatever the sinner do, in the way of obedience, I conceive it will be as good wisdom as our author teaches him to be very sober, with his *exiges* or demands. But to return, revelation, by teaching man's inability, doth not hinder him from virtue: but takes him off from his own strength, which would fail him in the performance, and leads him where he may get strength, and where innumerable persons have got strength to perform duty acceptably; and it points to the only ground, whereon sinful and imperfect obedience can be accepted with, or expect a reward from, God.

Query VIII. "Whether speaking good words, thinking good thoughts, and doing good actions be not the just exercise of a man's life? or that without embracing the foresaid five principles or fundamentals, it be impossible to keep peace among men, that God may be well served?"† Thus Blount. This is Herbert's seventh and last query, and he only adds one clause to it, wanting here: "Whether the laic may not spend his time better in those exercises mentioned, than if he employed it in deciding controversies he does not understand?"‡

The supposed necessity for the laic's perplexing himself with controversies, at which Herbert here aims, in case he sees meet to embrace revelation, we have above weighed and cast. But as to the query itself, it is utterly impertinent. For this is the question they should have proposed: "Whether their religion is sufficient to bring a man to these just exercises, and to maintain peace in society?" And not as they propose it; "whether these exercises be in themselves good," which nobody denies? Let this be the question, and we answer negatively. For this we have given sufficient reasons above.

Query IX. "Whether the aforesaid five principles do not best agree

* Herb. de Veritate, p. 108.
† Laici, Appen.

† Blount Rel. Laici, p. 92.

‡ Herb. Rel.

precepts of Jesus Christ, viz. "To love God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves?" as well as with the words of St Peter, "That in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of God?" *

This query is the same with Herbert's seventh and last persuasive to deism, which we have answered above. It is falsely supposed that revelation teaches, that the knowledge of the ten commands, or Christ's summary of them, is sufficient to salvation. Yea, revelation teaches expressly, that no man can practise them without grace from Christ, and that there is no other way of salvation but by faith in him. Again, it is falsely supposed, that the agreement of these articles with (that is to say their not contradicting) these commands, proves them a sufficient religion. This argument, if it proves any thing, proves too much; for it will prove any one of them alone to be sufficient. If the Deists mean, that their five articles, not only are not inconsistent with, but sufficient to bring men the length required by the ten commands, our Lord's summary of them, or to fear God and to work righteousness, as Cornelius did, I answer negatively to the question, they can bring no man to this. Cornelius, of whom Peter speaks, had embraced the Old Testament revelation. What Peter speaks of men "of all nations being accepted with God," relates to the discovery God had made to him of his design to admit men of all nations promiscuously to acceptance with him, through the gospel revelation: and consequently, that the opinion hitherto received by Peter and other Jews, of the continued confinement of revealed religion to Israel and its privileges, was a mistake. So that this place helps not the Deists. If it is not cut off from its scope and cohesion or interpreted without respect to it. This way of interpretation of scripture is not safe. I know not where Mr Blount learned it. But I can tell him where there is a precedent of it, Matt. iv. And if the Deists have a mind to follow that precedent, they shall not be followed by me.

Query X. "Whether the doctrine of faith can by human reason be supposed or granted to be infallible, unless we are infallibly assured, that those who teach this doctrine do know the secret counsels of God?" †

To this I answer, that I am sufficiently secured as to the infallible certainty of the doctrine, if I have received the scriptures upon the ground above-mentioned, without supposing any who now teach it, to have any further acquaintance with the secret counsels of God, than the word gives them.

Query XI. "Whether all things in the scriptures (besides the moral part which agrees with our five principles) such as prophecy, miracles and revelations depending on the history, may not be so far examined, as to be made appear by what authority they are or may be received?" ‡

I answer, revelation, in all parts, is capable to stand the test of the strictest trial, provided it be just, and managed as becomes. But I must tell the Deists one thing in their ear, that, if the scriptures once evince themselves to be from God, by sufficient evidence, that they are obliged, upon their peril, to receive all that it teaches, though they cannot prove it by reason; nay, nor explain it. But what if any revealed doctrine be contrary to reason? Upon the foregoing supposition, this query cannot be excused of blasphemy, but is highly impertinent and unreasonable.

Query. XII. "Whether in human reason any one may, or ought to be

* Blount Rel. Laici. p. 92, 93.

† Ibid. p. 93.

‡ Ibid. p. 93.

convinced by one single testimony, so far-as to believe things contrary to, or besides reason?"*

One single testimony is written in a different character in the query, perhaps to give us to understand, that by it is meant the testimony of the revealer, God. And it cannot reasonably be understood of any other; for upon no other single testimony save that of God, is an assent to revelation demanded, or pleaded for, by those he opposes.

This being premised, I say this query consists, and is made up of three as impious suppositions as can enter the thoughts of any of the sons of men; besides that they are mutually destructive of one another. 1. It supposes that the one single testimony of God is not a sufficient warrant for believing whatever he shall reveal. 2. It supposes that a revelation come from God may contain things really contradictory to our reason. 3. It supposes that the single testimony of God is not a sufficient ground to believe things that are besides our reason, though they be not contrary to it, that is, truths which we cannot prove by reason, or whereabout there are some difficulties which we cannot solve. Take these three impious suppositions out of the query, and it has no difficulty in it. If we suppose once a revelation to be from God, we must lay aside the second supposition as impossible, viz. That it can contain any thing really contrary to reason. Set aside this, which makes the query *felo de se*, destroy itself, and let the question be proposed. Whether we may believe upon the single testimony of God whatever does not really contradict our reason, though it contains some difficulties which we cannot solve? And then I say, it is impious to deny it.

Query XIII. And lastly, "Whether if it were granted they had revelations, I am obliged to accept of another's revelation for the ground of my faith? Especially if it doth any way oppose these five articles, that are grounded upon the law of nature, which is God's universal magna charta, enacted by the all-wise and supreme being, from the beginning of the world, and therefore not to be destroyed or altered by every whistling proclamation of an enthusiast." †

This query is of the same alloy with the former. To it we answer shortly, the Christian revelation, (in others we are not concerned,) exhibits matters of universal concernment, upon evidence of their divinity, capable to satisfy those who now live, as well as those, to whom they were originally made; and so are impertinently called another's revelation. And we are obliged to receive it as the ground of our faith, and rule of our practice as much as they. The supposition that is added, that it contains doctrines or precepts contrary to the law of nature, is impious and false. What he adds further about the whistling proclamations of enthusiasts, if it is not applied to the sacred writers, we are not concerned in it. If it is applied to them, first, it is false, that they taught any thing contrary to the law of nature. Secondly, it is impious to call them, in way of contempt, enthusiasts; or, at least, it is intolerably bold for any man to call them such, before he has proven it, which he never did, nor shall all the deists on earth, ever be able to do. Thirdly, it was rude and unmannerly to treat them with so much contempt, especially without arguments proving the charge, whom the whole authority of the land, all the persons vested with it, and the body of the people, respect as men infallibly directed of

* Blount Rel. p. Laici, p. 94.

+ Ibid. p. 94

God. Fourthly, It was disingenuous to treat them thus, after such pretensions as our author had made of respect to them, in this and his other books.

Finally, Mr Blount, instead of a fourteenth query, concludes with the testimony of Justin Martyr, as probative of his point. His words run thus : “ Finally, submitting my discourse to my impartial and judicious reader, I shall conclude with the saying of Justin Martyr, Apol. cont. Tryphon. p. 83. That all those who lived according to the rule of reason were Christians, notwithstanding that they might have been accounted as Atheists, such as among the Greeks were Socrates, Hieraclitus, and the like, and among the Barbarians, Abraham and Azarias : for all those who lived, or do now live, according to the rule of reason are Christians, and in an assured quiet condition *.”

As to this testimony of Justin Martyr, it is not probative with us : though we honour the fathers, yet we do not think ourselves obliged so submit to all their dictates. This is said, but not proven by him, either by scripture or reason. And I fear not to say, it is more than he or any other can prove. Abraham is impertinently classed amongst those who wanted revelation. Socrates and Hieraclitus, in so far as they lived according to reason, are assuredly praise-worthy, and upon this account are not to be reckoned Atheists. That they were Christians I flatly deny. Nor can it be proven from scripture or reason that their condition is assuredly quiet. And further than this I am not concerned to pass any judgment about their state at present : what it is, that day will manifest.

* Blount Rel. La'ci, p. 94, 95.

AN

ESSAY

CONCERNING

THE NATURE OF FAITH;

OR,

THE GROUND UPON WHICH

FAITH ASSENTS TO THE SCRIPTURES.

WHEREIN

THE OPINION OF THE RATIONALISTS ABOUT IT, IS PROPOSED
AND EXAMINED, ESPECIALLY AS IT IS STATED BY THE LEARNED MR LOCKE
IN HIS BOOK OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

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AN ESSAY

CONCERNING

THE NATURE OF FAITH, &c.

CHAP. I.

Containing some general remarks concerning knowledge, faith, and particularly divine faith, and that both as to the faculty and actings thereof.

ALL knowledge is commonly, and that not unfitly, referred to the understanding or intellectual power of the mind of man, which is conversant about truth. Our assent to, or persuasion of, any truth, is founded either, 1. Upon the immediate perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, and so is called intuitive knowledge. Or, 2. It results from a comparison of our ideas with some intermediate ones, which help us to discern their agreement or disagreement; and this goes under the name of rational knowledge. Or, 3. It leans upon the information of our senses, and this is sensible knowledge. Or, 4. It depends upon the testimony of credible witnesses. And this is faith.

Faith again, if it is founded upon the testimony of angels, may be termed angelical; if on the testimony of men, human; and if it is founded on the testimony of God, it is called divine faith: It is of this last we design to discourse, as what particularly belongs to our present purpose. When we speak of divine faith, we either mean the faculty or power whereby we assent unto divine testimony; or the assent given by that power. Both are signified by that name, and faith is promiscuously used for the one or the other.

Faith, as it denotes the faculty, power, or ability of our minds to perceive the evidence of, and assent to, divine testimony, is again either natural or supernatural. That naturally, we have a faculty capable of assenting in some sort to divine testimony, is denied by none so far as I know. But that ability whereby we are at least habitually fitted, disposed and enabled to assent in a due manner to, and receive with just regard, the testimony of God no man by nature has. This is a supernatural gift. Several questions I know are moved concerning this ability. It belongs not to my subject, neither doth my inclination lead me to dip much in them at present. I shall only suggest the few remarks ensuing.

I. It seems unquestionably clear, that man originally had a power, ability, or faculty capable of perceiving, discerning, and assenting, to divine revelations upon their proper evidence; for it is plain, that God did reveal himself to man in innocency, and that he made man capable of converse with himself; but if such a faculty as this we speak of had been

wanting, he had neither been capable of those revelations, nor fitted for converse with God.*

II. It may most convincingly be made out, that all our faculties have suffered a dreadful shock, and are mightily impaired by the entrance of sin, and corruption of our natures thereon ensuing; and particularly our understandings are so far disabled, especially in things pertaining unto God, that we cannot in a due manner, perceive, discern, or entertain divine revelations upon their proper evidence, unto the glory of God, and our own advantage, unless our natures are supernaturally renewed. But this, notwithstanding the faculty of assenting to divine testimony is not quite lost, though it is impaired and rendered unfit for performing its proper work in a due manner. I know none who assert, that any of our faculties were entirely lost by the fall. In renovation our faculties are renewed, but there is no word of implanting new ones. It is certain, unrenewed men, such as Balaam, and others, have had revelations made to them, and did assent to those revelations. Nor is it less clear, “that the devils believe and tremble.”

III. Whether men, in a state of nature, whose minds are not renewed, may not so far discern and be affected by the characters and evidences of God imprest upon divine revelations, particularly the scriptures, where those evidences shine brightly, as thereby to be obliged, and actually drawn to give some sort of assent unto the testimony of God, I shall not positively determine; though the affirmative seems probable to me. The impress of a deity is no less evident on the scriptures than his other works. He has magnified this word above all his name. Besides, I do not see, how the very faculty itself can be thought to remain, if it is not capable of discerning any thing of God, where he gives the most full and convincing evidence of himself, as unquestionably he doth in the scriptures. Nor do I doubt but multitudes of sober persons, trained up within the church, and thereby drawn to a more attentive and less prejudicial perusal of the scripture revelation, do upon sundry occasions, find their minds affected with the evidence of God in them, and thereby are drawn to assent to them as his word, though not in a due manner, and that even where they remain strangers unto a work of renovation. And sure I am, if it is so, it will leave the rejecters of the scripture remarkably without excuse.

IV. Whether some transient act of the Spirit of God is always necessary upon the mind, to draw forth even such an assent as that last mentioned, I shall not determine; that in some cases it is so, is not to be doubted. The faith of temporary believers undoubtedly requires such an action as its cause: and, where any thing of this evidence affects the minds of persons, at present deeply prejudicial, as they were who were sent to apprehend Christ, and went away under a conviction, “that never man spake as he did;” there such a transient work of the Spirit of God seems necessary to clear their minds of prejudices, and make them discern the evidences of a Deity. But whether it is so in other cases, I shall not conclude positively.

V. But were it granted, that faith—that is the faculty or power of believing, which is nothing else save the mind of man considered as a subject capable of assenting to testimony—still remains; and that though wofully

* We cannot conceive how reason should be prejudiced by the advancement of the rational faculties of our souls with respect unto their exercise toward their proper objects; which is all we assign unto the work of the holy Spirit in this matter. Dr Owen on the Spirit, preface, page 9.

impaired, weakened and disabled, it yet continues in so far able for its proper office or work, that either by the assistance of some transient operation of God's Spirit, breaking in some measure the power of its prejudices, and fixing it to the consideration of its proper objects, or even without this, upon a more sedate, sober, less prejudicial observation, it may, though less perfectly, perceive the impress and evidences of God, appearing in the revelations he makes of himself, and that thereon it may be actually so affected, as to give some sort of assent, and reach some conviction, "that it is God who speaks." Were, I say, all this granted, it will amount to no great matter; since it is certain, that every sort of faith or assent to divine testimony is not sufficient to answer our duty, obtain acceptance with God, and turn to our salvation. Nor is it so much of our concernment to inquire after that sort of faith, which fails of answering these ends, and therefore I shall dip no further into any questions about any faith of this sort, or our ability for it.

VI. It is more our interest to understand what that faith is, which God requires us to give to his word, which he will accept of, and which therefore will turn to our salvation; and whence we have the power and ability for this faith. Of these things therefore we shall discourse at more length in the next chapter designed to that end.

CHAP. II.

Wherein the nature of that faith, which in duty we are obliged to give to the word of God, our obligation to, and our ability for answering our duty, are inquired into.

WE have above insinuated, and of itself it is plain, that every sort of faith or assent to divine testimony answers not our duty, nor will amount to that regard which we owe to the authority and truth of God, when he speaks, or writes his mind to us. We must therefore, in the first place, inquire into the nature of that faith which will do so. Nor is there any other way wherein this may be better cleared, than by attending to the plain scripture accounts of it.

Now if we look into the scriptures, we find 1. The apostle Paul, 1 Thes. ii. 13, when he is commending the Thessalonians, and blessing God on their behalf, gives a clear description of that faith which is due unto the word of God. "For this cause also, says he, thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men; but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." If we advert to this description, we cannot but see these things in it. First, that some special sort of assent is here intended. The Thessalonians did not think it enough to give such credit, or yield such an assent as is due to the word of men, even the best of men. Secondly, in particular it is plain, that such an assent is intended as some way answers the unquestionable firmness of the testimony of the God of truth, which is the ground whereon it leans. Thirdly, it is obvious, that somewhat more is intended than a mere assent of whatsoever sort it is. The words plainly import such an assent, or receiving of the word of God, as is attended with that reverence, submission of soul, resignation of will, and subjection of conscience, which is due to God. This, the use of the

word elsewhere in scripture strongly pleads for, and the manner wherein the apostle expresses himself here is sufficient to convince any man that no less is intended. Less than this would scarcely have been a ground for the apostle's thanksgiving to God, and for his doing this without ceasing. And indeed we find that this expression elsewhere used, imports not only people's assent to, but their consent and approbation of the word of God; yea, and their embracing in practice the gospel, Act. viii. 14. and xi, 1. 2. We are told Heb. xi. 1. That it is the evidence of things not seen; *ἐπισημασία*, which we render evidence, signifies properly a convincing demonstration, standing firm against, and repelling the force of contrary objections. Faith then is such an assent as this, it is a firm conviction leaning upon the strongest bottom, able to stand against, and withstand the strongest objections. 3. The apostle more particularly describes the ground whereon it rests, or what that demonstrative evidence is, whereon this conviction is founded, and that both negatively and positively, I Cor. ii. 5. It stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. That is, it neither leans upon the eloquence, nor reasonings of men, but upon the powerful evidence of the Spirit's demonstration, as it is in the verse before.

Having given this short and plain account of faith from the scripture, we must in the next place prove, that in duty we are bound to receive the word of God with a faith of this sort. Nor will this be found a matter of any difficulty; for,

I. The scriptures hold themselves forth to us as the oracles of God, which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Spirit of God, and wrote by divine inspiration, and the Holy Ghost is said to speak to us by them. Now the very light of nature teaches us, that when God utters oracles, speaks and writes his mind to us, we are in duty bound, readily to assent, give entire credit to, and rely with the firmest confidence on the veracity of the speaker; and further, we are obliged to attend to what is spoken with the deepest veneration, reverence and subjection of soul, and yield an unreserved practical compliance with every intimation of his mind.

II. The scriptures were written for this very end, that we might so believe them as to have life by them, John xx. 30, 31. And again Rom. xvi. 25, 26. The scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, are said to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. Certainly then we are in duty obliged to yield this obedience of faith.

III. The most dreadful judgments, yea, eternal ruin, and that of the most intolerable sort, are threatened against those, who do not thus receive the words of God from his servants, whether by word or writ, is no matter. "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet, Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah than for that city, Mat. x. 14, 15. Accordingly, we find the apostles preach the word at Antioch in Pisidia, Act. xiii. demand acceptance of it both of Jews and Gentiles, and upon their refusal they testify against them in this way of the Lord's appointment, verse 51. And all this severity they used without offering miracles or any other proof for their doctrine, so far as we can learn, besides the authoritative proposal of it in the name of God.

IV. We find the apostle, in the words above quoted, commending the Thessalonians for receiving the word in this manner, which is proof enough, that it was their duty to do so.

This much being clear, it remains yet to be inquired, whence we have power or ability for yielding such an assent, whether it is natural or supernatural? Now if we consult the scripture upon this head, we find,

I. That this ability, to believe and receive the things of God to our salvation and his glory, is expressly denied to unrenewed man, or man in his natural estate, 2. Thes. iii. 2. "All men have not faith," 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," John. viii. 47.—"Ye therefore hear not God's words, because ye are not of God."

II. This is expressly denied to be of ourselves, and asserted to be a supernatural gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

III. The production of it is expressly ascribed unto God, he it is that "fulfils in his people the work of faith with power," 2 Thes. i. 11. He it is that gives them, that is, that enables them, "on the behalf of Christ to believe and suffer for his name," Phil. i. 29. It is one of "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. And of it Christ is the author, Heb. xii. 2. The further proof and vindication of this truth I refer to polemical writers.

But here possibly some may inquire, how it can be our duty thus to believe the scriptures, since we are not of ourselves able to do so? In answer to this, I shall only say, 1. The very light of nature shows, that it is our duty to yield perfect obedience, but yet certain it is, we are unable to answer to our duty. 2. The scriptures plainly require us to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," and with the same breath tells us, we must have grace to enable us to do it, Heb. xii. 28. 3. We have destroyed ourselves and by our own fault impaired the powers God originally gave us, and brought ourselves under innumerable prejudices and other evils, whereby the entrance of light is obstructed: but this cannot reasonably prejudice God's right to demand credit to his word, on which he has imprest sufficient objective evidence of himself, which any one that has not thus faultily lost his eyes, may upon attention discern. 4. It is therefore our duty to justify God, blame ourselves, and wait in the way he has prescribed for that grace which is necessary to enable us; and if thus we do his will, or aim, at least, at it, we have no reason to despair, but may expect in due time to be enabled to understand and know, whether these truths are of God, or they who spoke them did it of themselves, John. vii. 17. though yet we cannot claim this as what is our due.

From what has hitherto been discoursed it is evident, that this faith, whereby we assent to the scripture, is supernatural, or may be so called upon a twofold account—because the power or ability for it is supernaturally given, and the evidence whereon it rests, is supernatural.

In this chapter we have directly concerned ourselves only in the proof of the first of these, viz. "That our ability thus to believe is supernaturally given," and this has been the constant doctrine of the church of God, which we might confirm by testimonies of all sorts, did our designed brevity allow.* But our modern rationalists do resolutely oppose this. The author of a late atheistical pamphlet, that truly subverts all religion, may be allowed to speak for all the rest; for he says no more than what they do assent to. He tells us, "That when once the mystery of Christ.

* See Mr Wilson's Scripture's Genuine Interpreter asserted, Appendix, P. 4, 5, &c.

Jesus was revealed, even human reason was able to behold and confess it; not that grace had altered the eye-sight of reason, but that it had drawn the objects nearer to it."* To the same purpose speak the Socinians; Schlichtingius tells us, "man endued with understanding is no otherwise blind in divine mysteries, than as he who hath eyes, but sits in the dark: remove the darkness, and bring him a light, and he will see. The eyes of a man are his understanding, the light is Christ's doctrine. † To the same purpose doth the paradoxical Belgic exercitator, that sets up for philosophy as the interpreter of the Scripture, express himself frequently. Nor is his pretended answerer, Volzogius, differently minded; though he is not so constant to his opinion as the other.

But these gentlemen may talk as they please; we are not obliged to believe them in this matter, the Scriptures plainly teaching us, that our minds are blind, our understandings impaired and obstructed in discerning the evidence of truth, by prejudices arising from the enmity of the will, and depravity of the affections. Nor were it difficult to demonstrate from Scripture, that no man can believe, or understand the word of God aright, till, 1. The Spirit of God repair this defect of the faculty, or "give us an understanding," 1 John v. 20. 2. Break the power of that enmity that rises up against the truths of God as foolishness. 3. Cure the disorder of our affections that blind our minds. And 4. Fix our minds, otherwise vain and unstable, to attend to what God speaks, and the evidence he gives of himself. But this is not what we principally design, and therefore we shall insist no longer upon this head. Our present question is not about our ability or power to believe, but the ground whereon we do believe. What has been spoken of the former hitherto, is only to prepare the way for the consideration of the latter, to which we now proceed.

CHAP. III.

The Ground, or the formal reason, whereon faith assents to the Scriptures is enquired after; the opinion of the Rationalists about it, and particularly as stated by Mr Locke in his Book of Human Understanding, is proposed and considered.

THOUGH we have spoken somewhat concerning our ability to believe the Word of God, and the supernatural rise thereof in the preceding chapter, wherein we have offered our thoughts of that which goes under the name of 'subjective light;' yet this is not the question mainly intended in these papers. That which we aim more particularly to enquire after, is the ground whereon the mind thus subjectively enlightened, or by the Spirit of God, disposed, fitted, and enabled, to discern and assent to divine revelations, builds its assent, and wherein it rests satisfied, or acquiesces. The question then before us is this, what is that ground, whereon our reason moves and determines us to receive the Scriptures as the word of God? What is the formal reason whereon our faith rests, or what is the proper answer to that question, "Wherefore do ye believe the Scriptures

* Treatise of Human Reason, P. 58, published 1674, and to the Credit of the Church of England with an Imprimatur, quoted by Mr. Wilson ubi supra, Page 13.

† Wilson, Ibid. Page 7. Ibid. Page 11.

to be the word of God, and receive truths therein proposed as the Word of God and not of man?

It is in general owned by all, who believe the Scriptures to be a divine revelation, that the authority, truth and veracity of God, who is truth itself, and can neither deceive, nor be deceived, is the ground whereon we receive and assent to propositions of truth therein revealed. But this general answer satisfies not the question: for, though it is of natural and unquestionable evidence, that God's testimony is true, cannot but be so, and as such must be received; yet certain it is, that divine testimony abstractly considered, cannot be the ground of our assent unto any truth in particular: but that whereon we must rest, and whereon our faith must lean, is "the testimony of God to evidencing itself, or, as it gives evidence of itself unto the mind. The knot of the question then lies here, What is that evidence of God speaking or giving testimony to truths supernaturally revealed, whereby the mind is satisfied that God is the revealer? Or, when God speaks or intimates any truth to us, how or in what way doth he evidence to us, that he is the revealer; what ground is it whereon we are satisfied as to this precise point?"

Now whereas there are persons of three sorts, who may be called to assent to divine revelations, the question proposed may be considered with respect to each of them.

I. The question may be moved concerning those persons to whom the scripture revelations were originally made, and as to them it may be inquired, when God did reveal his mind unto the prophets, what was that evidence, what were those *τεκμηρια* or certain signs, whereby they were infallibly assured, that the propositions they found impressed upon their minds, were from God?

II. As to the persons to whom they did immediately reveal these truths, it may be questioned, what evidences they had to move them to assent, and give faith to those truths which were proposed to them as divine revelations? On what ground did they rest satisfied, that really they were so?

III. Whereas we, who now live, neither had these revelations made to us originally, nor heard them from the persons to whom they were so given; but being comprised and put together in the bible, they are offered to us as a divine revelation, and we are in duty, upon pain of God's displeasure in case of refusal, called and required to believe, and assent to whatever is therein "revealed, as the word of God and not of man;" hereon it may be moved, what is that evidence which this book gives of itself, that it is of God, whereon our minds may rest assured that really it is so?

As to the question, in so far as it concerns the first sort of persons mentioned, we shall not dip much into it; all I shall say is this, in the words of the judicious and learned Doctor Owen, "In the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and his actings on the minds of holy men of old, he gave them infallible assurance that it was himself alone by whom they were acted, Jer. xxiii. 28. If any shall ask by what *τεκμηρια* or infallible tokens they might know assuredly the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and be satisfied with such a persuasion as was not liable to mistake, that they were not imposed upon? I must say plainly, that I cannot tell; for these are things whereof we have no experience."*

* Dr Owen of the Spirit, book 2. chap. 1. § 10. p. 104.

There is one thing dropt as to this matter by the ingenious Mr *Locke*,* that deserves some animadversion. Though he delivers nothing positively about those evidences which the prophets had, yet negatively he tells us, that the assurance of the prophets did not at least solely arise from the revelations themselves, or the operation of the spirit impressing them upon their minds, which he calls the internal light of assurance: but that beside this to satisfy them fully, that those impressions were from God, external signs were requisite; and this he endeavours to prove from their desiring confirmatory signs, as Abraham and others did; and from God's giving such signs undesired. To this purpose his appearance to Moses in the bush, is by our author taken notice of. As to the opinion itself, I look on it as highly injurious to the honour of divine revelation, and I take the grounds whereon it is founded to be weak and inconclusive: For, 1. Mr *Locke*, nor any for him shall ever be able to prove, that these divinely inspired persons always required or got such confirmatory signs extrinsical to the revelation or inspiration itself; yea it is manifest, that for most part they neither sought them nor got them. 2. When they did seek or get them, Mr. *Locke* cannot prove, that either God or they found them necessary for the present assurance of the person's own minds, as if that internal light of assurance, to use Mr. *Locke*'s words, had not of itself, while it abode, been sufficient to satisfy the mind fully, that it was God who was dealing with it, or revealing himself to it. It is plain, that other reasons of their desiring such signs may be assigned. When the matters revealed were things at a distance which required some extraordinary outgoings of God's power to effectuate them, in that case they desired, and God condescended to grant to them some such extraordinary signs, not to assure them that God was speaking unto them, but to strengthen their convictions of the sufficiency of God's power, for enabling to do what he required of them, if it was difficult, or accomplishing what he promised to them in defiance of the greatest opposition. Sometimes divine revelations were promises of things at a distance, that were not to be actually accomplished till after a long tract of time, and over many intervening obstructions; in this case they were obliged to believe these promises, and wait in the faith of them, even when that light, that first assured them, was gone, and such evidences or signs might be of use to enable them to adhere unto the assent formerly given upon that supernatural evidence, that at first accompanied the revelation. Such signs then might be of use to strengthen the remembrance of that first evidence, which they had when the revelations were first imparted to them. These and other reasons of an alike nature might sufficiently account for their desiring these signs, and God's giving them; but as has been said, we design not a determination or full decision of this question.

We shall only consider the question with respect unto the two last sorts of persons, and as to those who heard, or had divine revelations immediately from inspired persons, our rational divines seem positive that the evidence whereon they assented to what they delivered as the mind of God, consisted in, or did result from the miracles they wrought, and other external signs, or proofs, which they gave of their mission from God. Monsieur le Clerk in his emendations and additions to Hammond on the New Testament, gives this gloss on 1 Cor. ii. 5. "Paul," says he, "would have the Corinthians believe

* Of Human Understanding, book 4. chap. 19. § 15. p. 593. Edition 5th, 1706.

him, not as a philosopher proposing probabilities to them, but as the messenger of God, who had received commandment from him, to deliver to them those truths which he preached, and, that he thus received them, he did show by the miracles which he wrought." And a little after he adds, "He whose faith leans upon miracles wrought by God's power, his faith is grounded upon the divine power, the cause of these miracles." As to this opinion itself, I shall express myself more particularly just now; but as to Monsieur le Clerk's fetching it from this text, he had no manner of ground for it. Let us but look into the verse before, and there we find the Apostle telling the Corinthians, that in his preaching he avoided the "enticing words of man's wisdom," and delivered his message in the demonstration of the spirit, and of power. Upon the back of this in the 5th verse, he tells them, his design in doing so was, "that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," that is, on the powerful demonstration of the Spirit of God, mentioned in the foregoing verse. How Monsieur le Clerk came to dream of miracles, and fetch them in here, while the scope and every circumstance of the text stood in the way of this exposition, I cannot divine; for nothing is more alien and remote from the sense of this place. If the author had followed the old approved interpreter of scripture, I mean the scripture itself, and had looked into the foregoing verse and context, he had given us a more genuine account: but philosophy, now set up for an interpreter, I had almost said a perverter, did certainly lead him into this violent and ridiculous gloss. But to come to the matter itself.

Miracles can be no otherwise the ground of any assent, than as they afford ground for, or may be made use of as the medium of an argument, whereby the divine mission of the worker is concluded and proven. This then must be the opinion of these gentlemen, that they, who heard the apostle or prophets, could not be satisfied in their minds, that what they said was divinely revealed, until they were convinced of it by proofs drawn from miracles of signs, wrought by the preacher, and that is not merely my conjecture, is evident from the accounts we have of their opinions, and hypotheses, whereof this is reckoned as a principal one, that the mind of man being rational cannot be moved, but by a rational impression, that is, by the force of effectual reasons: and to the same purpose we shall find Mr Locke expressing himself by and by.*

Upon this hypothesis it is evident, 1. That if a heathen came into a christian assembly, and heard Paul preaching, or even Jesus Christ himself, if he had never seen them work any sign or miracle, he would not be obliged to believe their doctrine. 2. If the apostles preach to those among whom they wrought no miracles, gave no such outward signs, such persons could not be obliged to believe them, the evidence whereon such a belief is founded being denied. 3. They who heard them, and saw the miracles, could not be obliged to assent unto their doctrine, until by reasoning they would have time to satisfy themselves, how far natural causes might go towards the production of such effects, and how far these things, admitting them to be supernatural, could go toward the proof of this, that what they delivered was from God. 4. If there was any among them so dull, as not to be capable to judge of these nice points, I do not see how, upon these principles, they could be obliged to believe. These and the like are no

* Spanheim, *Elench. controversiarum*, page 320, Edit. 1694.

strained consequences ; for it is undeniable, that our obligation to believe arises from the proposal of due objective evidence ; if this is wanting, no man can be obliged to believe.

As to us, who neither conversed with the inspired persons, to whom such revelations were originally given, nor saw the miracles they wrought, we are told by those rationalists that we have historical proofs, that there were such persons, that they wrote these revelations, which we now have, and, that they wrought such miracles in confirmation of their mission and doctrine : and upon the evidence of these proofs we must rest ; they will allow us no other bottom for our faith,—hence Monsieur le Clerk tells us, “ That whatever faith is this day in the world among christians, depends upon the testimony of men.”

Among many who have embraced this opinion, Mr Locke in his Essay on Human Understanding has delivered himself to this purpose, and upon several accounts he deserves to be taken special notice of. I shall therefore represent faithfully and shortly his opinion, and the grounds whereon it is founded, and make such animadversions upon them, as may be necessary for clearing our way. His opinion you may take in the ensuing propositions.

I. When he is speaking of the different grounds of assent and degrees thereof, he says, “ besides those we have hitherto mentioned, there is one sort of propositions that challenge the highest degrees of our assent upon bare testimony, whether the thing proposed agree or disagree with common experience and the ordinary course of things, or not. The reason whereof is, because the testimony is of such a one, as cannot deceive or be deceived, and that is of God himself. This carries with it assurance beyond doubt, evidence beyond exception. This is called by a peculiar name, revelation, and our assent to it, faith : which as absolutely determines our minds, and as perfectly excludes all wavering as our knowledge itself.”*

II. This, notwithstanding he tells us in the very same paragraph, that our assurance of truths upon this testimony, or to give his own words, “ our assent can be rationally no higher than the evidence of its being a revelation, and that this is the meaning of the expressions it is delivered in.” That is, as he himself explains it, “ If the reasons proving it to be a revelation are but probable, our assurance amounts but unto a probable conjecture.”†

III. He distinguishes betwixt traditional and original revelation. “ By the last of these,” says he, “ I mean that first impression which is made immediately by God on the mind of any man, to which we cannot set any bounds ; and by the other, those impressions delivered over to others in words, and the ordinary ways of conveying our conceptions one to another.”‡ And afterwards speaking of immediate or original revelation, he tells us, “ that no evidence of our faculties by which we receive such revelations, can exceed, if equal, the certainty of our intuitive knowledge.”§ And in the preceding paragraph, speaking of traditional revelation, he tells us, “ that whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be certainer to us, than those, which are conveyed by traditional revelation.”||

IV. He tells us, “ that true light in the mind can be no other but the evidence of the truth of any proposition,” and hereon he goes on to tell us,

* Hum. Underst. Book 4. Cap. 18. § 11. P. 564. 565. † Hum. Underst.

‡ Book. 4. Cap. 18. §. 3. P. 582. § Ibid. §. 5. P. 583.

|| Ibid. Book 4. Cap. 18. §. 1. p. 582.

“ that there can be no other evidence or light in the mind, about propositions, that are not self-evident, save what arises from the clearness and validity of those proofs upon which it is received :” And he adds, “ That to talk of any other light is to put ourselves in the dark, or in the power of the prince of darkness .” *

V. In this next paragraph he tells us plainly, that there is no way of knowing any revelation to be from God, but by rational proofs, or some marks in which reason cannot be mistaken. †

VI. In this next paragraph he tells us what before we have taken notice of, that the internal light of assurance, which the prophets had, was not sufficient to testify, that the truths impressed on their mind, were from God without other signs. ‡

Thus far, Mr Locke's opinion, which in sum amounts to this, that even the original revelation, had not in them intrinsic evidence sufficient to assure them on whom such impressions were made, that they were from God ; that other signs were necessary to satisfy them ; and that others who received such revelation at second hand, not from God immediately, but from inspired persons, have no other evidence to ground their assent on, besides that which results from arguments drawn from those signs, whereby they did confirm their mission ; and that we have no evidence who saw not those signs, besides that of the historical proofs, whereby it is made out, that the persons who wrote the traditional revelation we have, wrought such signs, in confirmation of their mission from God. It is worth our while to dwell a little here, and more narrowly consider Mr Locke's thoughts, and the grounds of his opinion. I shall therefore offer a few observations on this doctrine.

I. Mr Locke, in his first proposition, speaks very honourably of divine faith. As to the assent or act of faith, he says, “ that it is an assent of the highest degree, assurance without doubt.” As to the ground of it, he says, “ that it is such as challenges an assent of the highest degree ;” that it is “ evidence beyond exception.” These are goodly words. He has well spoken in all that he has said. I wish that his meaning and heart may be found as good as his words. “ All is not gold that glitters.” Let us then look a little more narrowly into his meaning.

To find it out, we shall suppose that God, as no doubt he did, does reveal immediately to Paul this proposition, “ Jesus is the son of God.” Here is a revelation. By Paul it is assented to. Well here is faith. Now in his believing this proposition, he may be said to assent to three things, “ That what God says is true, that Jesus is the son of God, and, that God says this to Paul.” Now I ask Mr Locke, or any of our rationalists that are of his mind, to which of these three is it that Paul assents, with an assent of the highest degree, and of which he has “ evidence beyond exception ?”

1. Could Mr Locke only mean, that we have the highest assurance of this general verity, that God's testimony is infallibly true ? No sure : for first, the assent to this truth is not an act of faith, but of intuitive knowledge. The truth itself is not a truth here divinely revealed but of natural evidence. This is not so much in this instance expressly assented to as supposed known.

2. Doth Mr Locke mean, that we assent to this proposition, that Jesus is the son of God. Had Paul assurance beyond doubt, and evidence beyond exception of this ? But sure Mr Locke knew that Paul in this supposition does not assent at all to this proposition, Jesus is the son of God absolutely, but as it is revealed. Well then, all the evidence that Paul has to ground

* Book 4. Cap. 19. § 13.

† Ibid. § 11.

‡ Ibid. § 15.

his assent upon, is the evidence of this, that, God says so to him. If then the evidence of God's saying so to him is not such as challenges an assent of the highest degree, Paul cannot have the highest degree of assurance of that proposition, the faith whereof leans entirely upon his assurance of this, that God has revealed it. For as Mr Locke says very truly in this same paragraph, "our assurance of any particular truth, that the matter revealed, can never rise higher in degree than our assurance of this, that is revealed." If then Paul has not evidence beyond exception, that God reveals the proposition we speak of to him, he can never have such assurance of the truth of the proposition materially considered. Wherefore,

3. Did Mr Locke think in his case, that Paul would have evidence beyond exception, challenging the highest degree of assent, and thereon assurance beyond doubt, or of the highest degree, of this, that God did in very deed say to Paul, that Jesus is the son of God; or of this truth, that Jesus is the son of God as revealed. It is the assent to this proposition that in proper speaking is faith. The assent to the general proposition above mentioned, is not an act of faith at all: nor is the assent to the proposition revealed, materially considered, an act of faith. Faith in this case, is only the assent to that proposition as revealed, or to the revelation of it. If then, Paul has not the highest evidence for, and thereon the highest assurance of this, that God says this to him, his faith can never be said to be the highest degree of assurance, or assent. This, then, Mr Locke must mean, or he means nothing. But yet I suppose he scarcely thought so: for, 1. he tells us afterwards, that we can have no evidence for receiving any truth revealed, that can exceed, if equal the evidence we have for our intuitive knowledge. If we have not then evidence, equal, at least, to that which we have for our intuitive knowledge, for our belief of God's being the revealer, or that he speaks to us, we cannot have the highest degree of assurance. 2. He afterwards tells us, that we have no evidence for this, that this or that truth is revealed to us by God; but that which results from reasons or arguments, drawn from marks, whereby we prove, that God is the speaker: but Mr Locke owns, that the evidence of all our reasonings, is still short of that which we have for our intuitive knowledge. Now methinks this quite overthrows Mr Locke's goodly concession. With what consistency with truth or himself, Mr Locke wrote at this rate, is left to others to judge.

II. Whatever there is in this concession yielded in favour of faith, Mr Locke afterwards takes care that we, who now live, shall not be the better for it: for afterwards he tells us plainly, "That whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our ideas, will always be certainer to us, than those which are conveyed by traditional revelation. We have no revelation at this day, but that which Mr Locke calls traditional. And here it is plain, that Mr Locke thinks that our certainty of any truth we have from this, is inferior in degree to any sort of natural knowledge, whether intuitive, rational, or sensible.

III. It is manifest, that the foundation of all is what Mr Locke teaches in the fourth position above mentioned, wherein he tells us, that to talk of any other light in the mind, beside that of self-evidence, reason, and sense, is to put ourselves in the dark. I have added this last, the light of sense, because Mr Locke, though he mentions it not here, yet elsewhere he admits it. That we may understand Mr Locke's assertion exactly, it must

be observed, that writers, when they treat of this subject, usually take notice of a twofold light. There is subjective light, by which is meant either our ability to perceive, discern, know and judge of objects, or our actual knowledge, assent, &c. Again, there is objective light, by which they mean that evidence whence our knowledge results, whereon it is founded, and which determines the mind to assent or dissent. Now it is of this last that Mr Locke is treating in his chapter of Enthusiasm, from whence this proposition is taken. And his opinion is this. He owns, that there is a threefold objective light, which is real and a just ground for the mind to assent on. There is first, self-evidence, which is the ground of our intuitive knowledge, resulting from the obvious agreement or disagreement of our ideas, appearing upon first view or intuition, when they are compared. Secondly, there is rational light, or the evidence resulting from arguments, wherein the agreement or disagreement of our ideas is cleared by assuming intermediate ideas, by the help of which our mind is cleared, as to what judgment it is to pass. Thirdly, there is the light of sense, or the evidence resulting from impressions made on our minds by the intervention and means of our organs of sense. But besides these, he admits of no other objective light or evidence that may be a just ground of assent; and adds, "That to talk of any other, is to put ourselves in the dark; yea, in the power of the prince of darkness, and turn Enthusiasts."

This grape must be pressed, that we may taste its juice, how it relishes. In the consideration of this doctrine delivered by Mr Locke, we shall not at present inquire whether it really does not preclude all place for faith, properly so called. This in issue will be further cleared. But whatever there is as to this, if Mr Locke's doctrine hold, certain it is, that either faith, if there is such a thing, must be founded on one of those three grounds of assent, or sorts of objective light, or it is altogether irrational. For an assent not founded on, and to which we are not determined by real objective evidence is brutish, irrational, and really 'Enthusiastic,' as being no reason or ground: and besides these three sorts of grounds, Mr Locke admits of none. Faith therefore must be founded either on one or other of them, or it must want all reason for it.

Further, it is to be observed, that Mr Locke taking self-evidence for that which is immediately perceptible without the intervention of any intermediate ideas, by the natural power of our intellectual faculties, not assisted, renewed, elevated, and influenced by any supernatural influence; and taking sensible evidence for that which is conveyed by the intervention of bodily organs, from corporeal substances, cannot be thought to make either of these the ground of faith to the testimony of God. And therefore it must have no reason save that rational evidence, which makes the middle sort of objective light. But I need not spend time in proving this, since it is no more than what he has taught us in the fifth proposition above-mentioned. This opinion thus far explained is indeed the sum, and contains the force of what is pleaded, or, for ought I know, can be pleaded for the judgment of our rationalists. We shall therefore weigh the matter more seriously, and proceed by some plain steps in the ensuing propositions.

"I. If good and solid reasons can be produced for proof of another sort of objective light or evidence, besides those three mentioned by Mr Locke, it must be admitted, though we should not be able to give a satisfying account of its nature, and other concerns."

1. This I believe was never denied in the general as to other things, by

any person of judgment, adverting to, and understanding what he said, and why it then should be refused in this case, I can see no ground.

2. If any has ever in general denied this in words, I am sure every man in fact admits it. Who is he that receives not many truths, that admits not the being of many things, upon good proof, from their causes, effects, inseparable adjuncts, &c. of the nature of which he can give no satisfying account? We all own the mutual influence of our souls and bodies upon one another, upon the proofs we have from the effects: but whoever understood the manner, how the soul operates on the body, or the body upon it? Instances of this sort are innumerable.

3. Sufficient proofs must always determine our assent; and if there are such in this case, it is unreasonable to refuse it.

4. If we have sufficient reasons to convince us, that there is a fourth sort of objective light distinct from those three admitted by Mr Locke, and only deny it because we understand not, or cannot give a clear account of its nature, I cannot tell, but on this same ground we shall reject, and be obliged to refuse these three sorts admitted by him, for the very same reason. Mr Locke perhaps has done as much as any man to explain them: but were he alive, I believe he would be as ready to own as any, that he has been far from satisfying himself, or offering what may fully clear others as to the nature of these things, wherein evidence consists, what it is, what is self-evidence, or that evidence which is the ground of our sensible or rational knowledge, how they operate and influence the assent. All his accounts are only descriptions taken from causes, effects, or the like. But what objective light or evidence is, wherein it really consists (and the like may be said of the rest) is as much a mystery as it was before, when he tells us, that self-evidence for example is that which is immediately perceived without the intervention of intermediate ideas. Here I learn, that it is not rational evidence, that requires such intermediate ideas: but this is all, unless it be, that it is perceptible by the mind, that is, it is evidence. But what evidence is, I am yet to learn. I think this proposition is plain.

II. "A fourth sort of objective evidence, different from those three assigned by Mr Locke, is not impossible."

1. If any say it is, it lies upon him to prove it. That Mr Locke, or millions more, observed no such light in their minds, found themselves determined to assent by no other objective evidence or light, will not prove it impossible; yea will not prove, that actually there is no such light; nay, will not prove, that there was no such light in their own minds. For Mr Locke, though he observed as accurately the manner of his mind, its actings, as most men, yet might not observe it so, but that he possibly overlooked somewhat that passed there. And if really Mr Locke did not assent upon other evidence to some things, though he observed it not, I doubt not by this time he is sensible it was his loss that it was so. It cannot be pretended, that it is impossible for want of a sufficient cause, while that God is in being, who is author of the three sorts of lights that are admitted, and who is the father of lights. Nor can it be pretended, that the members of this division stand contradictorily opposed to one another, as it is in this, every being is dependent or independent.

2. If any will say yet, it is impossible there should be a fourth or a fifth sort of light or objective evidence, I shall desire him only to stay a while, and consider the light of sense. It is nothing else save "that

evidence that results from impressions made on our minds by means of our organs of sense." Well, hereon I shall ask two questions.

First, Is it not possible for him who made those conveyances or organs of sense to frame more such, quite different from those we already have, and by means of them impart to us other perceptions, and determine us to assent on the evidence of the impressions conveyed to our minds by these other senses? If it is possible, as I see not how rationally it can be questioned, here is at least a fourth sort of objective light determining our minds to assent, admitted as possible.

Secondly, Here I would inquire, whether may not he, who, by these bodily organs we already have, impresses ideas upon our minds, and determines our assent to their agreement or disagreement, immediately without the intervention of such organs, make impressions on our minds, whereby our assent or judgment may rationally be swayed? To deny this, will look very odd and irrational to sober men, that have due thoughts of God. If it is admitted, we have here at least the possibility of another ground of assent, or objective light, acknowledged, different from those condescended on by Mr Locke.

III. We that have the benefit of sight, have in our minds a sort of objective evidence or light, different from all those which men born blind have. And why should it be then thought impossible that others may have in their minds an evidence that we have no experience of, and that it may be equally real, convincing, or more so than any that we have.

IV. Mr Locke grants, that there are extraordinary ways whereby the knowledge of truth may be imparted to men, that God sometimes illuminates by his spirit the minds of men, with the knowledge of truths, that there is no bounds to be set to such divine impressions. Now if all this is so, why may there not be evidence of a different sort, resulting from such extraordinary impressions, illuminations, &c. allowed to be also possible?

V. Either God can reveal his mind so to man, as to give him the highest evidence or objective light that he speaks to him, who gets that revelation, or he cannot. If he can, then there is possible an objective evidence, and that of the highest sort, different from those three mentioned by Mr Locke; for that it must be different, is evident, because Mr Locke in this case will allow no place for self-evidence, or that evidence we have in our intuitive knowledge, which he determines to be the highest degree of these three sorts he has admitted and owned. Speaking of immediate revelation, he says, "No evidence of our faculties, by which we receive such revelations, can exceed, if equal the certainty of our intuitive knowledge, as we heard above." Since then this evidence of the highest degree, is different from that which we have in our intuitive knowledge, if it is at all, it must be a different sort from any of those three: for by concession it is not self-evidence; and rational or sensible it is not, because these sorts of evidence are of a degree inferior to intuitive evidence. If then it is evidence of the highest degree, since Mr Locke will not admit it to be self-evidence, it must be none of the three: and so we have a fourth sort admitted possible. But if God cannot reveal his mind, so as to give the greatest objective evidence, that he speaks, or is the revealer, then I say, it is plain, and follows unavoidably, that God's testimony can never have from man the highest degree of assent, which Mr Locke above expressly acknowledged to be its due. It is in vain to say, that God's testimony is infallible: for our assent to any truth upon God's testimony, as Mr Locke truly says, can never

rise higher, than the assurance we have of this, that really we have God's testimony, and take its meaning. If then God cannot give us the highest evidence or objective light as to this, no truth he offers can have from us the highest degree of assent. To me this looks like blasphemy, to imagine, that God has made a rational creature, to whom he cannot so impart his mind as to give it such evidence as is absolutely necessary to lay a ground for entertaining his testimony with that respect, which is its unquestionable due. That his testimony is in itself infallible, will never make our assent of the highest degree, unless the evidence of his giving testimony is of the highest degree.

III. We assert, that *de facto* there really is a sort of objective evidence or light, different from those condescended on by Mr Locke.

1. The prophets to whom immediate revelations were made, had objective evidence or light sufficient to ground the highest assurance that the truths impressed on their minds were from God. It is impious to deny it. But this Mr Locke will not allow to be such evidence as we have in our intuitive knowledge, and all must confess, that it did not result from their outward senses, and that it was not grounded on reasonings from evidences, marks or signs, extrinsical to the revelations themselves, seems undeniable, or even from reasoning, and making inferences from what was intrinsical to the revelation. For, 1. We find not, that this persuasion came to them by such argumentation or reasoning. We can see no ground from any accounts we have in scripture to think, that they took this way to assure their own minds. Yea, 2. The scripture accounts of the way of their being convinced, seem all to import, that as God impressed the truths on their minds, so that immediately, by that very impression, he fixed an indelible and firm conviction of his being the revealer. Again, 3. We see, that the evidence was so convincing as to bear down in them the force of the strongest reasonings and the clearest arguments that stood against it, as we see evidently in the case of Abraham, he is commanded to offer his son Isaac. If this command had not been impressed on his mind with an evidence, that God was the revealer, beyond what any reasoning upon signs and marks, and I know not what, could pretend to, the strong plain arguments that lay against it, strengthened by a combination of the strongest natural affections, must have carried it. 4. If Abraham was convinced by such reasonings, that God revealed this, that this command was from God, is it not strange that he makes no mention of them, when it was so obvious, that it was liable to be questioned, whether God could give such a command. But the truth of it is, it is obvious to any one that thinks that nothing could prevail in this case, but the incontrollable and irresistible evidence resulting from the very impression, whereby the command was revealed. But to wave any further consideration of this, which now we have no experience of.

2. Mr Locke will admit, that the primitive christians, who embraced the gospel, did it upon sufficient objective evidence. He is not a christian who denies it. But he will not admit intuitive evidence in this case. And I shall, I hope, afterwards make it appear, that it was not on the evidence of such reasonings, as Mr Locke talks of, that they embraced it.

3. The scriptures demand our assent, and offer no evidence but this of God's authority. And arguments are not insisted on to prove, that it is God that speaks; God calls us not to assent without objective evidence, and yet waves the use of such arguments as Mr Locke would have to be the foundation of our faith. There must certainly be therefore some objective light

of a different sort supposed, that must be the ground of our assent. And that there really is so the scriptures teach, as we shall see afterwards, when this proposition must be proven, and explained more fully.

4. Abstracting from what has been said, we have as good ground as can be desired, and as the nature of the thing admits, for believing there is really a light distinct from those mentioned by Mr Locke. As to the persons who have it, this light evidences itself in the same way as the other sorts of intellectual light do. They are conscious of it, and find it has the same effect determining the mind to assent, assuring it, and giving it rest in the full conviction of truth. As to others who want it, they have such evidence as a blind man has that there is such a thing as visible evidence. They have the concurring suffrage of persons sober, judicious, and rational, who have given evidence of the greatest cautiousness in guarding against delusion, enthusiasm, and groundless imaginations. Besides, the effects peculiarly flowing from such a faith as leans on this foundation, gives evidence to it. But I cannot stay to prove this further at present.

IV. "Though perhaps an account every way satisfying cannot be given of the nature of this light, nor can we so clear what it is, and wherein it consists, as to make those who are unacquainted with it, understand it, or have as exact a notion of it as they have, whose experience satisfies them as to its reality: yet such an account may be given of it, as may secure it against the imputation of unreasonableness, and unintelligibility. To this purpose, I shall only observe the few things ensuing.

1. That light or objective evidence, whereon we are obliged to believe, and all that are subjectively enlightened to believe the scriptures, and ground their assent, is such, that a more intelligible account by far may be given of it to those, who have no experience of it, than can be given of the objective evidence of visible objects to persons who have no experience of sight. To clear this,

2. It is to be observed, that in the writings of men, especially of some, who have any peculiarity of genius, and excel in any kind, we find such characters, marks, and peculiar evidences of them, not only in the matter, but in the manner of expression and way of delivering their thoughts. There is such a spirit, and somewhat so peculiar to themselves to be observed, that such as have any notion of their writings, cannot thereon avoid a conviction, that this, or that book, though it bears not the author's name, or those other marks, whereon we depend as to our opinion of the authors of books, of whom we have no particular acquaintance, is yet written by such an author, the vestiges of whose peculiar spirit and genius run through, and are discernible in, the strain of the book. There are few men, who are acquainted with books, and read them with attention and judgment, who have not the experience of this. And hence, we are frequently referred to this, as what may satisfy us, that books that bear such authors' names are genuine and truly their's. And it is found more convincing than the attestation of no incredible witnesses in many cases. Yet it must be confessed, that persons of the best judgment, and most capable to express their thoughts, will find it difficult, if not impossible to express intelligibly wherein this objective evidence consists: but that really it is there, and that there is such a thing, is impossible for them to question. *

* Though you had not named the author, &c. I could have both known, and avouched him. There is a face of a style, by which we scholars know one another, no

3. If poor men, who differ infinitely less from one another, than the most exalted created being can be supposed to do from God, do impart to the product of their own thoughts, and leave on their writings such peculiar and discernible characters of their own genius and spirit, as, at first view, upon the least serious attention, convinces the reader, that they are the authors, and enables him to distinguish their writings from others, is it not reasonable to suppose, that a book written by God, must carry on it a peculiar and distinguishing impress of its author, and that by so much the more certainly discernible, by any that has right notions of him, as the difference betwixt him and the most exalted human genius is infinitely greater, than that betwixt the most contemptible pamphlet-writer and the most elevated scholar? Nay, it is not impossible rationally to imagine the contrary? Can we think, that he, who in all his works, even in the meanest insects, has left such objective evidence, and such impressions of himself, whereby he is certainly known to be the author, has not left impressions, more remarkable and distinguishing, on his word, which he has magnified above all his name, that is all the means whereby he designs to make himself known, and which he designed to be the principal means of imparting the knowledge of himself to men, and that to the highest purposes, their salvation and his own glory?

4. This impress, those characters, prints, and vestiges of the infinite perfections of the Deity, that unavoidably must be allowed to be stamped on, and shine, not merely, or only, or principally in the matter, but in that as spoken or written, and in the writings or words, in their style, the spirit running through them, the scope, tendency, &c. This θεοπρόσεια or God-becoming impress of Majesty, Sovereignty, Omniscience, Independence, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, is not only a sufficient and real, but in very deed, the greatest objective light and evidence imaginable. And where one has an understanding given to know him that is true, and is made thereby to entertain any suitable notion of the Deity, upon intuition of this objective evidence, without waiting to reason on the matter, his assent will be carried, and unavoidably determined to rest on it as the highest ground of assurance. And this assent, founded on this impress of the Deity in his own word, is indeed an assent of the highest degree. And thus far faith resembles our intuitive knowledge, with this difference, not as to the manner of the mind's acting, but as to the ability whence it acts; that in our intuitive knowledge, as Mr Locke, and those of his opinion restricts it, the evidence or objective light is such, as not only is immediately without reasoning discerned, but such as lies open to, and is discernible by our understandings, without any subjective light, any work of the Spirit of God either repairing our disabled faculties, or elevating, and guiding them to the due observation, or fixing their attention, or freeing their minds of the power and present influence of aversion of will, disorder of affections, and prejudices that obstruct the discerning power. Whereas this is really necessary in this case, and though the objective evidence is great, and still the same, yet, according to the greater or lesser degree of this assistance, our assent must be stronger or weaker, more fixed or wavering.

5. When this objective evidence is actually observant to, and under the view of the mind thus enabled, disposed, and assisted, there doth arise from it, and there is made by it, an impression on the whole soul corresponding

less than our persons by a visible countenance. Bishop Hall, Pref. to Dr Twiss, his doubting Cons. resolved, Page 2.

thereto. The beaming of God's sovereign authority awes conscience. The piercing evidence of his Omniscience increases that regard, the view of Goodness, Mercy, Love and Grace operates on the will, and leaves a relish on the affections, and this truly resembles sensible evidence, though it is of spiritual things, and of a spiritual nature; nor is it, as it is evidence, inferior to, but upon many accounts preferable to that which results from the impression made by sensible objects. And this, as was observed of the former, is also greater or less, according, and in proportion unto the view we have of that objective light above-mentioned. This self-evidencing power is a resultancy from, and in degree keeps pace with, that self-evidencing light.

6. The effects wrought on the soul are such, many of them, as not only are most discernible in the time, but likewise do remain on the soul, some of them ever after, many of them for a long tract of time, and in their nature, are such, as evidently tend to the perfecting of our faculties, are suitable to them, and for their improvement, even according to what unprejudiced and sober reason determines, as to that wherein the defects of our faculties, and their perfection consists. And the reality of those effects, whereof the mind is inwardly conscious, appears to the conviction of beholders, in their influence upon the persons' deportment before the world.

7. Hence it is, that though our conviction neither needs, nor is founded on reasonings; yet from those effects ground is given, and matter offered for a rational and argumentative confirmation of our assent, and the grounds thereof and the validity of it for our own confirmation, when that evidence which first gave ground for our faith, and wherein it rests, is not actually under view, as also for the conviction of others.

8. This evidence is such, as indeed challenges, and is a sufficient bottom for an assent of the highest degree. And indeed the saints of God, and that even of the meanest condition, and who have been under the most manifest disadvantages, both as to capacity and education, with the like occasions of improvement, upon this bottom have reached faith, comprising assurance without doubt, even that full assurance of faith, yea, the riches of the full assurance of understanding, as has been evident by the effects in death and life, of which we have notable instances not a few in Heb. xi. throughout, both in adversity and prosperity, life and death.

V. I observe, "that this life or objective evidence whereon faith is bottomed, has no affinity with, but is at the furthest remove from enthusiastic impulse, or imaginations."

1. This is not a persuasion without reason. Here is the strongest reason, and the assent hereon passed leans upon the most pregnant evidence.

2. It carries no contradiction to our faculties, but influences them, each in a way suitable to its nature and condition.

3. Yea more, none of our faculties in their due use do contradict, or at least disprove it. Whereas enthusiastic impressions are irrational.

4. This is not a persuasion, nor a ground for it without, or contrary to the word, but it is evidence of the word itself, that by it we are directed to attend to, and improve.

5. Yea it is what our other faculties in their due use will give a consequential confirmation to, as we have heard. Wherefore,

6. Mr Locke shall be allowed to run down enthusiasm as much as he pleaseth, and persuasions whereof no reason can be given, but that we are strongly persuaded, or not to give credit to those that can say no more for them-

selves, but we see or feel, &c. But these things as delivered by Mr *Locke*, need some cautions. As, 1. A persuasion whereof no reason can be given, is certainly not faith but fancy : But a persuasion whereof he that hath it, through weakness, cannot give an account, may be solid. 2. A persuasion may be solid, of which he that hath it, cannot give another evidence of the same kind he hath himself. It is enough that proof of another sort, and sufficient in its kind, is offered. 3. If one says, he sees and he feels, this, may be satisfying to him, though he cannot give any distinct account of the evidence he hath. And that he cannot thus account for the nature of things, that are within him, concludes not against the reality and truth of what he has the experience : but his experience is not ground of conviction to others, unless other proofs are offered. A man of a shallow capacity, destitute of education, might be convicted of enthusiasm by a subtle blind man to whom he cannot for his seeing give an evidence of the same kind, nor open the nature of visible evidence, nor give any other proof, that he is not mistaken, but that he sees, and yet he is not mistaken, assents not without reason, and has no ground to call in question what he sees, but may and will securely laugh at all the blind man's quirks, and tell him he is blind. The case is parallel. We must not, by this atheistical scare-crow, be frightened out of our faith and experience.

VI. That many read the scriptures, without discerning any thing of this light, is no argument against it. For,

1. Many want that supernatural ability, that understanding whereby God is known, whereby Christ's sheep know his voice from that of a stranger, and so not being of God, they cannot hear his words.

2. Many want, and are utterly destitute of any tolerable notions of God : It is impossible such should discern what is suitable to him.

3. Many have perverse notions of God riveted on their minds, and that both among the learned and unlearned, and finding the scripture not suited to, but contrary to those false preconceived impressions, they look on it as foolishness.

4. Many want that humble frame of spirit, which has the promise of divine teaching ; " The meek he guides in the way." It is they who are fools in their own eyes, who get wisdom.

5. Many are proud and conceited deeply, and no wonder then that they know nothing.

6. Many have the vanity of their minds uncured, and so hunt after vain things, and fix not in observation of what is solid, and thereby their foolish hearts are hardened, and their minds darkened and diverted.

7. Not a few are under the power of prevailing lusts, disordered affections, and out of favour to them they are so far from desiring an increase of knowledge, that on the contrary, they like not to retain God in their knowledge. What they already know, is uneasy to them, because contrary to their lusts, and therefore they would be rid of it.

8. Many there are that despise the spirit of God, reject his operations, seek not after him, condemn him : and no wonder such as refuse the guide, lose their way.

9. Many for those and other sins, are judicially left of God to the " god of this world," who blinds the minds of them that believe not.

10. Many never attempt to do his will, and so no wonder they come not to a discerning whether the word spoken and written is of God. And if all these things are considered, we shall be so far from questioning the truth,

because many see not the evidence, that this very blindness will be an argument to prove the truth of it, and a strong evidence of the need of it, and of supernatural power to believe it.

Finally, Persons sober and attentive want not some darker views of this evidence, which may and should draw on to wait for more. And I take the honourable concessions, in favour of the scriptures, made by adversaries, to have proceeded from some fainter view of this sort.

Thus I have considered the force of what I find pleaded by Mr Locke, stated the question, cleared in some measure our opinion as it stands opposed to that of the rationalists, assigned an intelligible notion of the reason of faith, and showed it to be such as the meanest are capable of, and such as is proposed to all who are obliged to believe the scriptures, whereas these historical proofs are above the reach of thousands, and were never heard of by innumerable multitudes, who, on pain of damnation, are obliged to receive the scriptures as the word of God.

IV. Having in our third observation overthrown the ground of Mr Locke's opinion, we now are to clear, that what he builds on, it must of course fall, as particularly what he tells us, lib. 4, cap. 18, par. 6, page 584. "That they, who make revelation alone the sole object of faith, cannot say, that it is a matter of faith, and not of reason, to believe that such or such a proposition, to be found in such or such a book, is of divine inspiration; unless it be revealed, that that proposition, or all in that book was communicated by divine inspiration." And he goes on telling us, "that without such a particular revelation, assuring us of this, that this proposition is by divine inspiration, it can never be matter of faith, but matter of reason to assent to it."

What Mr Locke designs by this discourse, I know not; unless he meant to put us under a necessity to prove every proposition of the scripture to be of divine inspiration, before we believe what it exhibits. And if this is what he intends, he overthrows the christian religion entirely, at least as to its use and advantage to the generality. But waving what further might be observed, I shall only animadvert a little upon that one assertion, "That our belief, that this or that proposition is from God, is not an act of faith, but of reason." As to which I say,

1. If Mr Locke designed no more than this, that the mentioned assent to the scripture propositions is an act of, and subjected in our rational, or intellectual faculty, it might well be admitted. Or,

2. If Mr Locke meant, that this assent is agreeable to the nature of our minds, that it is not really contrary to the true principles of reason, nor such as proceeds without such grounds as the nature of our understandings require for founding an assent, we should admit, that in this sense, it is an act of reason, that is, a rational act, as not only being elicited by our understandings, but depending on such a reason or ground, as the nature of the intellectual power requires, and which must always be consistent with our certain knowledge. But,

3. Neither of these being intended, we cannot go along with Mr Locke in what he means by this expression, that our belief of Scripture propositions is an act of reason, that is, an assent not built on divine testimony, but on such other arguings and reasonings, as we can find out for proving that God revealed it. Because we say, and shall afterwards prove, that the scriptures do evidence themselves to be from God, in that way above expressed, and afterwards to be explained and confirmed, which we hope

shall be done in such sort, as may effectually repel the force of what Mr Locke has pleaded in opposition to the Scriptures, and show, that there is no reason for ranking all the truths therein delivered amongst those conjectural things that lean only on probabilities and reasonings from them, which Mr Locke evidently does, while he sinks traditional revelation as to the point of certainty below our intuitive, rational, and sensible knowledge; and banishes all faith, properly so called, out of the world, leaving no room for it, and substituting in its place an act of reason, proceeding upon probabilities, that is, on historical proofs, which he reckons only among probabilities: Nor do I blame him for this last, though perhaps some things he has offered on this head might be excepted against; but this is not my business.

I. The question amounts to this in short, “Whereas the Scriptures, wherever they come, oblige all to whom they are offered, to receive them not as the word of man, but, as indeed they are, the word of God;* upon what ground or formal reason is it, that we assent thus unto them, and receive them as the word of God, to his glory and our salvation, in compliance with our duty?”

In answer to this important query, I shall offer what, upon a review of former experience, consideration of the scriptures, and what others, especially that judicious and profound divine Dr Owen, in these two treatises he has written on this subject, have written on this head, appears satisfying to me, and this I shall do in the few following propositions, which I shall, with as much brevity and perspicuity as I can, lay down, explain, and shortly confirm, with some few arguments.

PROP. I.

“That faith whereby we assent unto, and receive the word of God, to his glory and our salvation, is faith divine and supernatural.”

I. THERE are at this day who teach, that whatever faith is this day to be found amongst men, is built upon, and resolved into the testimony of men.† And therefore it will be necessary to insist a little in confirming and explaining of this important truth.

II. To clear this we observe, that the understanding, or that faculty, power, or ability of the soul of man, whereby we perceive, and assent unto truths upon their proper evidence, may be distinguished or branched into divers subordinate powers, in respect of the different truths to which it assents. 1. We have an ability of assenting unto the self-evident maxims of reason, such as that, “the same thing, at the same time, cannot be, and not be,” upon their own self-evidence, without any other argument, than a bare proposal of them in terms we understand. 2. We have an ability to assent unto other truths, upon conviction of their truth by arguments, drawn from the fore-mentioned self-evident truths, or any other acknowledged or owned by us. 3. We have an ability to assent unto truths, upon the evidence of the testimony of credible witnesses, or persons worthy to be believed, and of deserving credit. This ability, and the assent given by it to such truths, upon such testimony, are both called by the same common name, “Faith.”

III. Faith then, is that power or ability of the mind of man, whereby

* 1 Thessalonians ii. 13.

† Le Clerk in his Logics.

he is capable of receiving, and actually assents unto truths upon the evidence of the testimony of persons worthy of credit, who know what they testify, and will not deceive us. Now, whereas the person giving this testimony, is either God, men or angels, good or bad, faith may be considered as either divine, human, or angelical. This last, as of no consideration to our purpose, we shall lay aside. Faith, or that ability whereby we assent to the testimony of men worthy of credit, is called "Human Faith." And that whereby we assent to truths upon the evidence of God, who cannot lie, is called "Divine Faith."

IV. Divine faith is that power or ability whereby we assent unto, and receive truths proposed to us upon evidence of the word or testimony of God, to our own salvation, in compliance with our duty, to the glory of God.

V. In this account of divine faith, we add, in compliance with our duty, to the glory of God, and our own salvation, because devils and men may yield some assent unto truths, upon the evidence of God's testimony, which neither answers their duty, nor turns to the glory of God in their salvation, of which we do not now design to speak, and therefore by this clause have cut it off, and laid it aside, as not belonging to that faith whereof we now speak, and whereby we conceive all, to whom the scriptures come, are obliged to receive them.

VI. This faith now described may be called divine, and supernatural, and really is so on two accounts, 1. Because this ability is wrought in them, in whom it is found, by the divine and supernatural power of God. 2. Because it builds not its persuasion of, yields not its assent unto, the truths it receives upon any human authority or testimony; but upon the testimony of God, who can neither be ignorant of any truth, deceived, or deceive us.

VII. It now remains, that we confirm this proposition that we have thus shortly explained. And this we shall do by its several parts. First, then, we assert, that this faith "is wrought in these, who have it, by the power of God." Now for clearing this, we shall only hint at the heads of a few arguments, leaving the further proof to polemic treatises. 1. This ability to believe and receive the things of God to our salvation and his glory, is, in scripture, expressly denied to natural or unrenewed men. 2 Thes. iii. 2. "All men have not faith." 1 Cor. ii. 14.——"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." John viii. 47.——"Ye therefore hear not God's words, because ye are not of God." 2. This is expressly denied to be of ourselves, and asserted a supernatural gift of God. Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." 3. The production of it is ascribed unto God. He it is that fulfils in his people the work of faith with power. 2 Thes. i. 11. He it is that gives them, that is, that enables them, "on the behalf of Christ, to believe and suffer for his name," Philip. i. 29. It is one of the fruits produced by the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. and of it Christ is the author. Heb. xii. 2.

VIII. We are next shortly to prove, "That this faith builds its persuasion on the testimony of God evidencing itself such unto the mind," and not on human testimony. 1. It is in scripture expressly said not to "stand in the wisdom of men." 1 Cor. ii. 5., that is, it leans not on the word, authority, eloquence or reasonings of men. 2. It, is expressly in that same

verse, said to “stand in the power of God,” that is, as the foregoing words compared with 5, 13, explain it, “in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” and which he demonstrates or evidences by his power accompanying them, to be the word of God. 3. It is described in such a way as fully clears this; it is held forth as a “receiving of the word, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe,” 1 Thes. ii. 13. Many other proofs might be added, but this is sufficient to answer our purpose.

IX. We shall next shortly prove, “That we are obliged in duty thus to believe the scriptures, or to receive them as the word of God, and not of men.” 1. The scriptures are indeed, and hold forth themselves, every where, as the word of God. They are the oracles of God, which “holy men of God spake by the motion of the spirit of God, and wrote by divine inspiration, and the Holy Ghost speaks to us by them.”* Now when God utters oracles, speaks, writes and utters his mind to us, we are in duty obliged and bound to assent to what he says, and yield what obedience he requires. This the very light of nature teacheth. 2. The scriptures were written for this very end, that we might believe, “and that believing we might have life.” John xx. 30, 31. The scriptures of the prophets (which contain the revelation of the mystery of God’s will, otherwise not known) “according to the commandment of the everlasting God, are made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith,” Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Again the scriptures are termed a “more sure word of prophecy” than the “voice from heaven, and men are said to do well, to take heed to them,” 2. Pet. i. towards the close. That is, it is their duty to take heed to them or believe them. 3. The most dreadful judgments are threatened against those who receive not the word of God from the prophets or apostles; whether by word or writ, is all one. “Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gohmorrhah, in the day of judgment, than for that city,” Matth. x. 14, 15. Accordingly we find the apostles preach the word at Antioch in Pisidia, Act. xiii.; demand acceptance of it both of Jews and Gentiles, and upon their refusal they testify against them in the way of the Lord’s appointment, v. 51. Though so far as we can learn, they there wrought no miracle to confirm their mission. 4. We have above heard the apostle commending the Thessalonians for receiving the word as “the word of God, and not of man.” 1 Thes. ii. 13., which sufficiently shows that it was their duty.

X. Whereas some may here say, “how can it be our duty to believe the word of God, since it has been above proved, that we are not able of ourselves thus to do it.” I answer briefly, 1. The very light of nature requires perfect obedience of us; and yet we are not able to yield to it. 2. The scriptures plainly require, “That we serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,” and yet we must have grace whereby to do it.† 3. We have destroyed ourselves, and that through this, our faith or natural ability of believing truths upon testimony, is so impaired and weakened, and by prejudices so obstructed, otherwise, that we are not able to discern the evidence of God’s authority in his word, nor assent thereon to his testimony in

* Heb. v. 12. 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. 2 Tim. iii. 10. Mar. xii. 36. Acts i. 16. Acts xxviii. 25. Heb. iii. 7.

† Heb. xii. 28.

a due manner, yet this cannot prejudice reasonably God's right to demand credit to his word, whereon he has impressed such prints of his authority, as are sufficiently obvious to any one's faith, that it is not thus faultily depraved. 4. We have therefore no reason to question God, who gave us eyes, which we have put out, but to blame ourselves, and aim to do his will, that is, wait on him in all the ways of his own appointment; and we have no reason to despair, but that in this way we may have graciously given of God's sovereign grace, an understanding to know whether these truths are of God, or they who spoke them did it of themselves. Though we cannot claim this as what is our due.*

Thus we have in some measure cleared what that faith is, whereby the scriptures must be believed to the glory of God and our own salvation, and confirmed shortly our account of it from the scriptures of truth. We now proceed to

PROP. II.

“The reason for which we are obliged in duty to believe or receive the scriptures as the word of God, is not, that God has by his spirit wrought faith in us, or given us this ability thus to receive them.”

THIS proposition we have offered, because some do blame protestants, for saying it; whereas none of them really do it. Nor can any man reasonably say it. For clearing this observe,

I. It is indeed true, that we cannot believe them, unless God give us this gracious ability or faith to believe them, and by his Holy Spirit remove our natural darkness, and clear our minds of those prejudices against his word, wherewith naturally they are filled.

II. Yet this is not the reason wherefore we do assent unto, or receive the scriptures; for, it were impertinent, if any should ask “Upon what account do ye believe the scriptures to be the word of God?” to answer, “I believe it, because God has wrought the faith of it in me.”† This is not to tell wherefore we do believe, but to tell how we came to be furnished with power or ability to believe.

PROP. III.

“We are not to believe the scriptures, upon the authority of any man or church: or the reason wherefore we are in duty bound thus to assent to, or receive the scriptures as the word of God, is not, *that any man, or church, says so.*”

THIS is fully demonstrated by our writers against the Papists. For confirmation of it, it is sufficient to our purpose at present to observe,

I. That to believe, that the “scriptures are the word of God,” because such a man, or church says so, answers not our duty. Our duty is to believe God speaking to us, upon the account of his own veracity; and not because men say, this is his word. This is not to believe God and his prophets for the sake of their own testimony, but for the authority of men.‡

II. The faith that leans upon this testimony, is built not on the truth of God; but on the testimony of men, who may be deceived and deceive. All men are liars.

* Hos. xiii. 9. † 1 John v. 20. John vii. 17. ‡ 2 Chr. xv. 20.

III. We have no where in the word this proposed as the ground, whereon, in duty, we are obliged to believe the scriptures.

IV. The church, and what she says, is to be tried by the word, and her testimony is so far only to be received as the word consents: and therefore we cannot make this the ground of our faith, without a scandalous circle, which the church of Rome can never clear herself of.

But I need insist no further on this head. That church which only claims this regard to her testimony, is long since become so well known, and so fully convicted of manifold falsehoods, that her testimony rather prejudices than helps to confirm whatever it is engaged for.

PROP. IV.

“The rational arguments whereby the truth of the Christian religion is evinced and demonstrated against Atheists, though they are many ways useful, yet are not the ground, or reason, whereon in a way of duty, all who have the scriptures proposed to them, are obliged to believe and receive them as the word of God.”

THESE moral and rational considerations are, and may be, many ways useful to stop the mouths of enemies, to beget in them, who yet are unacquainted with the true intrinsic worth of the word, some value for it, and engage them to consider it, to relieve them that do believe, against objections, and strengthen their faith. This is allowed to them; and is sufficient in this loose and atheistical age, to engage persons of all sorts, who value the scriptures, to study them. But yet it is not upon them that the faith required of us, as to the divine authority of the scriptures, is to be founded. For,

I. These are indeed a proper foundation for a rational assent, such as is given upon moral proof or demonstration. And they are able to beget a strong moral persuasion of this truth. But this assent, which they beget, cannot, in any propriety of speech, be called faith, either divine or human. For faith is an assent upon testimony.

II. The faith that is required of us, is required to be founded not on the wisdom of men, that is, the reasonings or arguings of men.* Now this leans only and entirely on these.

III. This faith is in way of duty required of many. Many are, in duty, obliged to receive the scriptures as the word of God, to whom these arguments were never offered: the apostles never made use of them; and yet required their hearers to receive and believe their word.

IV. This faith many are obliged to, who are not capable of understanding or reaching the force of these arguments.

PROP. V.

“The faith of the scriptures’ divine authority is not founded on this, that they by whom they were written, did, by miracles, prove they were sent of God.”

I NEED not spend much time in clearing this. It will sufficiently confirm it to observe,

I. That many are, and were in duty obliged to yield this assent to, and believe the scriptures, who saw not these miracles.

* 1 Cor. xii. 15.

II. We are no other way sure of these miracles being wrought, than by the testimony of the word.

III. This way is not countenanced by the word ; for it no where teaches us to expect miracles as the ground of our assent, but upon the contrary declares, that the word of Moses and the prophets is sufficient to lay a foundation for faith, without any new miracle.*

PROP. VI.

“The reason whereon, in duty, we are bound to receive the scriptures as the word of God, is not any private voice, whisper or suggestion from the spirit of God, separate and distinct from the written word, saying in our ear, or suggesting to our mind, the scriptures are the word of God.”

THERE is no need to insist long in proof of this. For,

I. Many are bound to believe the word of God, to whom never any such testimony was given : but no man is bound to receive the scriptures, to whom the ground whereon he is bound to believe them, is not proposed.

II. There is no where in the word, any ground given for any such testimony. Nor doth the experience of any of the Lord’s people witness, that they are acquainted with any such suggestion. And besides, the question might again be moved concerning this suggestion, “Wherefore do ye believe this to be the testimony of “God.”

PROP. VII.

“That whereon all, to whom the word of God comes, are bound to receive it with the faith above described, is not any particular word of the scripture bearing testimony to all the rest. As for instance, it is not merely or primarily upon this account, that I am bound to receive all the written word as the word of God, because the scripture says, 2 Tim. iii. 16. That all scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

THIS is very plain upon many accounts, some of which I shall shortly offer.

I. We would have been obliged to believe the scripture with faith supernatural, though these testimonies had been left out. Yea they who had them not, were obliged to believe the word of God.

II. These have no more evidence of their being from God, than other places of scripture : and therefore we are not to believe the scriptures, merely on their testimony : but have the same reason to receive with faith as the word of God, every part of the scripture as well as these testimonies.

PROP. VIII.

“The reason why we are bound, with faith supernatural and divine, to receive the word of God, is not, that the things therein revealed, or the matters of the scriptures is suitable unto the apprehensions, which men naturally have of God, themselves, and other things, and congruous to the interests, necessities desires, and capacities of men.”

I SHALL not spend time in overthrowing this which some seem fond of, only for confirming the proposition observe,

I. This suitability of the matter unto the apprehensions, or natural no-

* Luke xvi. 31.

tions of men concerning God, themselves and other things, &c. as discerned by men, unrenewed, and made out by their reasonings, is not a ground for faith or an assent to testimony, but for a persuasion of another sort.

II. There are many things revealed in the scripture, which are to any mere natural man no way capable of this character. No man receives, or can reasonably receive on this account, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the like. It is true, these are not contrary to our reason: but it is likewise true, they have no such evident congruity to the notions our reason suggests of God, as should engage us to receive the discovery as from God; yea on the contrary, there is a seeming inconsistency that has startled many.

PROP. IX.

“When therefore it is inquired, wherefore do ye believe, and by faith rest in the scriptures as the word of God, and not of man? We do not answer, it is because God has given us an ability so to do—because the church says, it is the word of God—because there are many moral arguments proving it so because they who wrote it, wrought miracles—because God has by some voice whispered in our ear, or secretly suggested it to us, that this is the word of God—or because there are particular scriptures which bear witness to all the rest that they are of God—nor finally, because the matter therein revealed, seems worthy of God to our reason.”

THIS is the sum of what has been hitherto cleared: and the reasons offered conclude against all these, whether we take them separately or conjunctly. They prove, that not one of them, nor all taken together, are the formal reason whereon we are obliged to believe the word of God, or receive it with faith supernatural and divine.

PROP. X.

“The formal reason or ground whereon I assent to, or receive the whole scriptures, and every particular truth in them, and am obliged in duty so to do, is, the authority and truth of God speaking in them, and speaking every truth they contain, evidencing itself to my faith, when duly exercised about them, and attending to them, by their own divine and distinguishing light and power. Or when it is inquired, wherefore do ye believe, receive, assent to, and rest in the scriptures as indeed the word of God, and not of man? I answer, I do believe them, because they carry in them, to my faith, an evidence of God, or do evidence themselves by their own light and power to my faith duly exercised about them, that they are the word of God, and not of man.”

Now for explaining this, which is the assertion that contains the truth principally intended, I shall offer the few following remarks:

I. However great the evidence of God in the word is, yet it cannot, nor is it requisite that it should, determine any to receive and assent to it, whose faith and ability of believing is not duly disposed: though the sun shine never so clearly; yet he that has no eyes, or whose eyes are vitiated, and under any total darkening indisposition, sees it not. No wonder then, that they, who have not naturally, and to whom God has not yet, by supernatural grace, given eyes to see, ears to hear, or hearts to perceive, discern not the evidence of God's authority and truth in the word.

II. Although there really may be in any an ability, or faith capable of dis-

cerning this evidence; yet if that faith is not exercised, and duly applied to the consideration of the word, whereon this evidence is impressed, he cannot assent unto, or believe it in a due manner, to the glory of God, his own salvation, and according to his duty. There is evidence sufficient in many moral, metaphysical, and mathematical truths: and yet abundance of persons, who are sufficiently capable of it, do not assent unto these truths, nor discern this evidence; not because it is wanting, but because they do not apply their minds to the observation of it in a due way. God has not imparted such an evidence to his word, as the light of the sun has, which forces an acknowledgement of itself upon any, whose eyes are not wilfully shut: but designing to put us to duty, he has imparted such evidence, as they, who have eyes to see, if according to duty they apply their minds, may discern, and be satisfied by.

III. This light and power evidencing the divine authority of the scriptures, is really impressed upon every truth, or every word which God speaks to us, especially as it stands in its own place, related to, and connected with the other parts of the scripture, whereto it belongs. But of this more anon.

IV. When to the question, "Wherefore, or on what grounds do I assent to the scriptures as indeed the word of God, and not of man," it is answered, I do it, because it evidences itself God's word by its own light or power. There is no place for that captious question, how know ye this light and power to be divine, or from God? For it is of the nature of all light, external and sensible, or internal and mental. (anent which two it is hard to determine which of them is properly, and which only metaphorically, light) that it not only clears to the mind other things discernible by it, but satisfies the mind about itself, proportionably to the degree of its clearness. The light of the sun discovers sensible objects, and satisfies us so fully about itself, that we need have recourse to no new argument to convince us that we have this light, and that it is real. In like manner the evidence of any mathematical truth, not only quiets us about the truth, but makes the mind rest assured about itself. And so the divine light and power of the word, not only satisfies our minds, as to those truths they are designed of God to discover, but, in proportion to the degree of light in them, or conveyed by them, satisfy the mind about this light or power, that it is truth and is no lie. Nor is there need for any other argument to convince a mind affected with this, of it. It is true, if a blind man should say to me, how know ye that the sun shines, and ye see it? I would answer I know it by the evidence of its own light affecting mine eyes: and if he should further say, but how prove ye to me, that ye are not deluded, that really it is so? Then I would be obliged to produce other arguments whereof he is capable: but then it must be allowed that the evidence of these arguments is not so great as the evidence I myself have of it by its own light; though they may be more convincing to him. And further, this is not to convince myself, but to satisfy him, and free my mind from the disturbance of his objections. In like manner, if one, that denies the scriptures, shall say, wherefore do ye believe or rest in the scriptures as the word of God? I answer, I do it, because they evidence themselves to my mind, by their own light, or power, to be of God. If he shall say, I cannot discern this. I answer it is, because your mind is darkened; ye want eyes, or have them shut. If he shall further urge, that my light is not real, I will prove it by arguments, which may stop his mouth, and be more convincing to him than my assertion, which is all that hitherto he has: but yet these argu-

ments are not that whereon my mind rests satisfied as to the truth ; though they may be of great use, not only to convince him, but to relieve my mind against such subtle sophisms, as he might make use of, which, though they could not persuade me out of the sight of my eyes, or the evidence shining to my mind, yet troubled me how to answer them, and at times, when, through my inadvertency, or indisposition of my eyes, or through clouds overspreading and interposing betwixt this light and me, these objections might shake me a little.

V. Considering we are but renewed in part, and our faith is imperfect, and liable to many defects, the ministry of the church is of manifold necessity and use, to awaken us to attend this light, to cure the indispositions of our minds, to hold up this light to us, to point out and explain the truth it discovers, whereby our minds are made more sensible of the evidence of this light. And upon many other accounts of an alike nature, are the ordinances necessary, and through the efficacy of the divine ordination and appointment, useful for establishing our minds, naturally sluggish, dark, weak and unstable, and which are exposed to manifold temptations, in the faith of the scriptures.

VI. In order to our holding fast our faith, and being stable in it, besides this outward ministry, and the inward work of the Holy Ghost, giving us an understanding to discern this evidence, and besides the forementioned use of the moral arguments above-mentioned ; besides all these to our believing and persevering, in a due manner, in the faith of the scriptures, we stand in need of the daily influences of the spirit of God, to strengthen our faith or ability of discerning spiritual things, to clear our minds of prejudices, and incidental indispositions, to seal the truths on our minds, and give us refreshing tastes of them, and confirm us many ways against opposition.

VII. This light, whereby the written word evidences itself unto the minds of those who have spiritual ears to hear, and apply them, is nothing else save the impress of the majesty, truth, omniscience, wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, mercy and authority of God, stamped upon the scriptures by the Holy Ghost, and beaming or shining into the minds of such persons upon their hearing or perusal, and affecting them with a sense of these perfections, both in what is spoken, and in the majestic and God-becoming way of speaking. They speak as never man spake ; the matter spoken, and the manner of speaking, has a greatness discernible by a spiritual understanding, that satisfies it fully, that God is the speaker. And all the impressions of God's wisdom, faithfulness, omniscience and majesty, that are stamped upon the matter contained in the scriptures being conveyed only by the word, do join the impressions that are upon the word, and strengthen the evidence they give of their divine original, since these impressions do not otherwise appear to our minds, or affect them, than by the word. The word, by a God-becoming manifestation of the truth, that scorns all these little and mean arts of insinuation, by fair and enticing words, and artificially dressed up argumentations, with other the like confessions of human weakness, that are in all human writings, commends itself to the conscience, dives into the souls of men, into all the secret recesses of their hearts, guides, teaches, directs, determines and judges in them, and upon them, in the name, majesty and authority of God. And when it enters thus into the soul, it fills it with the light of the glory of the beamings of those perfections upon it ; whereby it is made to cry out, "The voice of God, and not of man."

VIII. This power, whereby the word evidences itself to be the word of God and not of man, is nothing else save that authority and awful efficacy, which he puts forth in and by it over the minds and consciences of men, working divinely, and leaving effects of his glorious and omnipotent power in them and on them. It enters into the conscience; a territory exempt from the authority of creatures, and subject only to the dominion of God; it challenges, convinces, threatens, weakens, sets it a roaring, and the creation cannot quiet it again. It commands a calm, and the sea, that was troubled before, is smooth, and devils and men are not able to disturb its repose. It enters into the mind, opens its eyes, fills it with a glorious, clear, pure, and purifying light, and sets before it wonders unknown, and undiscerned in counsel and knowledge concerning God, ourselves, our sin, our duty, our danger, and our relief, the works, the ways, the counsels and purposes of God. It speaks to the will, converts it, and powerfully disengages it from what it was most engaged to, what it embraced, and was even glued to, before; so that no art or force of eloquence, argument, fear, or hope, could make it quit its hold. It makes it hastily quit its embraces, and turn its bent another way, the quite opposite way, and with open arms embrace what nothing could make it look to before, takes away its aversion, makes it willingly not only go, but run after what it bore the greatest aversion to before, and obstinately refuse to close with any other thing. It enters the affections, makes them rise from the ground, gives them such a divine touch, that, though they may through their fickle nature, be carried at a time by force another way, yet they never rest, but point heaven-ward. It comes to the soul, sunk under the pressure of unrelievable distresses, sticking in the miry clay, refusing comfort, and in appearance capable of none; it plucks it out of the clay, raises it out of the horrible pit, sets its feet upon a rock, fills it with joy, yea makes it exceeding joyful, while even all outward pressures and tribulation continue, yea are increased. It enters into the soul, lays hold on the reigning lusts to which all formerly had submitted, and that with delight, it tries and condemns those powerful criminals, makes the soul throw off the yoke, and join in the execution of its sentence against and on them. Now where the case is thus stated, how can the soul, that feels this powerful word, that comes from the Lord most high, do otherwise than fall down, and own, "That God is in it of a truth."

IX. Whereas some may hereon object, "That many, who have for a long time heard and perused this word, have not perceived this light, nor felt this power, and on this supposition, seem exempted from any obligation to believe the word." I answer,

1. Many who have spent not a few years in prying into the works of God in the world, have not discerned to this day the beaming evidence, and clear declarations of his glory in them; yet none will hereon say, that they are excusable, or that want of an evidence is chargeable on the works of God. And why should not the case be allowed the same as to the word? May they not have this evidence, though men do not discern it? And may not men, even on account of this evidence, be obliged to believe them?

No wonder many discern not this light, and are not affected with it, since all men have put out their own eyes, or impaired by their own fault, that faith or power of discerning the voice of God, speaking either by his word or works, which our natures originally had. In many this evil is increased, and this power further weakened by their shutting their eyes, and entertainment of prejudices manifestly unjust against God's word and works. Others

turn away their eyes, and will not look to, or attend the word in that way wherein God ordains them to attend to it, that they may discern its light, and feel its power. And God has hereon judicially given many up to the power of Satan to be further blinded. And no wonder they, whose eyes the God of this world has blinded, should not discern the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God shining into their minds.

III. No wonder they should not discern this; for God to this day has not given them "Eyes to see, ears to hear, or hearts to perceive." It is an act of sovereign grace, which God owes to none, to open their eyes, which they have wilfully blinded; and where he sees not meet to do this, it is not strange, that they are not affected with the clearest evidence.

IV. Light, however clear, cannot of itself supply the defect of the discerning power. The sun, though it shines, cannot make the blind to see. The word has this light in it, though the blind see it not: yea I may venture to say, that the word of God contained in the scriptures, which he has magnified above all his name, has in it more, and no less discernible evidences of the divine perfections, and consequently of its divine original and authority, than the works of creation, some of which are sufficient to carry in some conviction of God in it, even on the minds of those who are not savingly enlightened, if they attend but to it in the due exercise of their rational abilities, that is, in such a manner as they do, or may attend to it, without saving illumination, laying aside wilful prejudice which, though it will not be sufficient to draw such an assent, as will engage and enable them to receive the scriptures, in a due manner, to the glory of God, and their own salvation, and comply with them; yet I conceive it will be sufficient to justify against them the word's claim to a divine original, and cut them off from any use of, or excuse from a plea of the want of sufficient evidence of the divine original of the word. I nothing doubt, but many of these, who upon conviction said, "That Christ spake as never man spake," were strangers to saving illumination, and yet saw somewhat of a stamp and impress of divinity in what he said, and the manner of saying it, that drew this confession from them, that rendered them inexcusable, in not listening to him, and complying with his word. And I doubt not, the case will be found the same as to many, with respect to the written word, and would be so to all, if they seriously, and without wilful prejudices, attended to it.

X. I further observe, that to engage to this assent, it is not requisite, that every one feel all these, or the like particular effects at all times, but that the word have this power, and put it forth, as occasion needs, and circumstances require it.

Having thus explained, we are now to prove our assertion, "That the ground whereon we are in duty obliged to believe and receive the word of God as his word, and not the word of man, and whereon all who have received, and believed it in a due manner to the glory of God and their own salvation, do receive it thus, is the authority and veracity of God speaking in and by the word, and evidencing themselves by that light and power, which is conveyed into the soul, in and by the scriptures, or the written word itself."

Many arguments offer themselves for proof of this important assertion, which hitherto we have explained; some of the most considerable of them I shall shortly propose, without insisting largely on the prosecution of them, designing only to hint the arguments that satisfied me, that I was not mistaken as to the grounds whereon, by the forementioned experience, I was brought to receive the scripture as the word of God.

Arg. I. God ordinarily, in the scripture, offers his mind, requiring us to believe, obey, and submit to it upon this and no other ground, the evidence of his own testimony. The only reason commonly insisted on to warrant our faith, oblige us to believe and receive, is, "Thus saith the Lord."

Arg. II. When false prophets set up their pretended revelations in competition with his word, he remits them to the evidence his words gave by their own light and power, as that which was sufficient to distinguish and enable them to reject the false pretensions, and cleave to his word, Jer. xxiii. 26,—29. "How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? That are prophets of the deceit of their own hearts; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the mountains in pieces?" In the latter days of that church, when the people were most eminently perplexed with false prophets, both as to their number and subtilty, yet God lays their eternal and temporal safety, or ruin, on their discerning aright between his word, and that which was only pretended so to be. And that they might not complain of this imposition, he tenders them security of its easiness of performance, speaking of his own word comparatively as to every thing, that is not so, he says, it is as wheat to chaff, which may infallibly, by being what it is, be discerned from it; and then absolutely that it hath such properties, as that it will discover itself, even light, heat and power. A person divinely inspired was to be attended to for no other reason, but the evidence of the word of God distinguishing itself from the pretended revelations, and satisfying the mind about it, by its light and power.

Arg. III. When further evidence, as that of miracles, is demanded, as necessary to induce them that are unbelievers, to receive and believe the word, it is refused, as what was not in the judgment of God, needful, and would not be effectual; and unbelievers are remitted to the self-evidence of the word, as that which would satisfy them, if any thing would. Thus our Lord teaches clearly in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke xvi. 27. to the end. The rich man, being disappointed as to any relief to himself in the preceding verses, is desirous of preventing the ruin of his brethren, and for this end is concerned to have them induced to believe. To which purpose he proposes, v. 27. the sending of Lazarus from the dead to certify them of the reality of things eternal: "I pray thee therefore, father," says he to Abraham, "that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Here the case is plain. The rich man desires a miracle to satisfy his brethren. This is refused, and they are remitted to Moses and the prophets, as what was sufficient. He insists, and thinks a miracle would be more satisfying. This is still refused, and it is plainly taught, that where the evidence of the word of God will not induce to believe or persuade, the most uncommon miracles would not do it.

Arg. IV. When the question is considered particularly, 1. Cor. xiv.

what gifts were most to the use of the church, the miraculous gifts of tongues, &c. or the ordinary gift of prophecy, or preaching of the word; this last is preferred, as what was not only more useful for the edification of believers, but for inducing unbelievers, to receive the word, and submit to it, and the way wherein it does this, is mentioned, which is no other than by its evidencing itself upon its naked proposal, in preaching by its own light and power. Let the whole passage be considered from v. 22, but especially v. 24, 25. But if all prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not, or unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report, that God is in you of a truth."

Arg. V. The constant practice of the apostles fully proves our assertion. The way they took to persuade the unbelieving world to receive the gospel, was not by proposing the arguments commonly insisted upon now, for proving the truth of their doctrine, nor working, nor insisting upon miracles wrought by them, for confirmation of the truth, but by a bare proposal of the truth, and a sincere manifestation of it to consciences, in the name of God they proceeded and demanded acceptance of it, as the word of God and not of man; and by this means they converted the world. And when they did refuse it thus proposed, they shook off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them, and so laid them open to that awful threatening of our lord, of punishments more intolerable than those of Sodom and Gomorrha.

Arg. VI. The experience of those who do believe aright, confirms it fully. However they may be relieved against the objections, and capacitated to deal with adversaries by other arguments and means, yet that whereon believers of all sorts, learned and unlearned, lean, is the word of God evidencing itself unto their faith, by its own light and power. The unlearned are for the most part capable of no other evidence, and yet upon this alone in all ages, in life and death, in doing and suffering, they have evidenced another sort of stability and firmness in cleaving to it, and suffering cheerfully for it, on this account only, than the most learned, who were best furnished with arguments of another nature, but wanted this; and indeed if this is not allowed the ground of faith, there can be no divine faith leaning upon a divine and infallible bottom; and the vulgar, who are incapable of any other evidence, must rove in uncertainty, and "pin their faith upon the sleeves of their teachers:" But blessed be God, here is a ground sufficient to rest on, that will not fail. He speaks, and his sheep, notwithstanding that simplicity, which makes them contemptible in the eyes of the world, "know his voice, hear it, and follow him, and will not hear the voice of a stranger."

PROP. XI.

"Whereas it may be pretended, that on supposition of what has been now asserted, the people of God, at times when they discern not this light, feel not this power, have no ground for their faith, with respect unto these passages or portions of scripture, which do not evidence themselves to be from God, at the time of their persual, or of their hearing of them, by affecting the believer's mind, with a sense of this divine light and power. In opposition to this objection, and for removing the ground of it, I offer the following truth, which afterwards I shall clear, that there is no part of the scriptures, in so far as God speaks in them, but doth thus sufficiently evi-

dence its authority in its season, unto persons capable of discerning it, and duly applying themselves in the way of the Lord's appointment, in so far as they are at present concerned to receive, believe and obey it, in compliance with their present duty, and reach the meaning of the proposition in and by the use of the means of God's appointment."

THIS objection has sometimes had a very formidable aspect to me, and therefore I shall distinctly propose, so far as the brevity designed will permit, the grounds whereon I was satisfied about the truth proposed in opposition to it, in the following explicatory and confirming observations, referring for further clearing, as to the way wherein the Lord quieted me, and relieved me of objections, to the foregoing chapter.

I. We are to observe, that faith, or that power in man whereby he assents to truth upon testimony, is corrupted, as well as his other powers, by his fall. And though in believers it is renewed, they receiving an understanding, whereby they know him that is true, and "know his voice from that of a stranger," yet even in them it is imperfect, and habitually weak, they being renewed, and so knowing but in part; as it is with respect unto his other powers, so it is as to this. And besides this habitual weakness, which engages them to cry to the Lord daily for carrying on the "work of faith with power," and an increase of faith to believe and live to God in a due manner; besides, I say, this habitual weakness, it is liable to various extraordinary incidental disorders, arising from inward and outward occasions, while the believer is here in this valley of tears, subject unto the miseries occasioned by the remaining power of indwelling corruptions, which are in themselves restless, and raise many fogs, damps and mists to overcloud the soul: and by the violence of outward temptations, which Satan and the world throw in upon him, through the wise permission of God, for the exercise of their faith in this state of trial, the darkness is exceedingly increased, faith weakened, or at least straitened as to its exercise. And by this means this spiritual discerning is sometimes in more, or in less obstructed and darkened. Now if at such seasons, while the believer finds himself out of order thus, he cannot discern this evidence, of the divine authority of the word, no not where it shines clearest, in so far as to quiet him, he has no reason to reject the word, question it for want of evidence, but may be, and ordinarily, believers are exercised in complaints of their own darkness, as the cause of their not discerning God in his word: *Vitium est in organo*, there is no fault in the word, but in the discerning power. The argument, if it be urged with respect to such a case as this, would prove, that there is no light in the sun.

II. The Lord's people, through the power of corruption, and force of temptation, are oft negligent and inadvertent, and do not apply their minds, nor incline their hearts unto the word, with the attention necessary to discern the evidence of God in the word, and as a punishment of this, God withdraws, and leaves their minds under the darkness they are hereby cast into, and then when God passes by or before, or on the right or left hand, and worketh round about them, they cannot perceive him. If we turn our back to the light, shut our eyes, or will not be at pains to remove motes or humours that obstruct our sight, no wonder we do not discern the light. When we have idols in our hearts and eyes, no wonder we see not God. If we lay not aside the filthiness of our hearts, we cannot receive the ingrafted word, that is able to save our souls, in a due manner.

III. Although the whole scriptures come from God, are his word, yet

every proposition in them contained, as it is a proposition in itself expressive of such a particular purpose or thought, is not his word : for God tells us men's words and the devil's words. Now though God speaks them in so far as so teach, that they are such person's words, yet the propositions in themselves are not to be received with faith : but we are only to assent to this upon the authority of God, that they said so and so, not always that these are true ; for oft times in themselves they are false and pernicious. Now evidence as to any more than the truth of God in the historical narration of them, is not to be expected, nor are the scriptures to be impeached for the want of it.

IV. Although every divine truth, which God speaks, has equal authority, and sufficient evidence, yet every scripture truth has not a beaming evidence, equally great, clear and affecting. The scripture is like the heaven, another piece of divine workmanship. It is full of stars, every one of these has light sufficient to answer its own particular use for which it was designed, and to satisfy the discerning and attentive beholder, that it is light: but yet every one gives not a light equally clear, great, glorious, affecting and powerful ; “ there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars : and one star excelleth another in glory,” and sometimes the greatest light, if it is at a greater distance, like the fixed stars, affect us less, and shine less clear to us, than weaker lights, which like the moon, are nearer. In the scripture, there are propositions which tell us things, which though they are in their own place and proper circumstances, useful to them, for whom they are particularly designed, and to their proper scope ; yet they are comparatively of less importance to us, as acquainting us with things of less considerable natures and use to us, and which lie not so far out of our reach, being in some measure known, or knowable without divine revelation, though it was necessary, that in order to the particular use to us in our walk with God, they should be better secured, and offered us upon the faith of the divine testimony. Again, there are other propositions, which hold forth to us truths in their own nature of more importance, that lie further out of our reach, being neither known, nor indeed knowable by us, without divine revelation ; and which in our present cases and circumstances are more nearly suited to our case, and wherein therefore our present concernment doth more directly appear to be interested, and which therefore impress us with, and leave in us effects more lasting and discernible. Now it must be allowed, that the truths of this last sort have an evidence more bright, great, affecting and sensible, than these of the former sort.

V. Hereon sundry subordinate observations offer themselves, which are of the greatest importance for clearing the difficulty under consideration.

I. Truths in scripture, or propositions acquainting us with things otherwise, in some respect within our reach, and only vouched by God in order to the stability of our faith in them, in so far as we are in practise obliged to lay weight on them, and to give us not so much satisfaction as to their truth absolutely, as some additional security about them, those cannot be supposed so discernibly to affect our minds, as truths of another nature, inasmuch as this additional evidence is more difficulty distinguishable from the evidence we have otherwise for them. Besides that God seeing that we are not so difficulty to be induced to a belief of them, or so liable to temptations that may shake our faith, sees it not meet to stamp such vivid, lively and affecting impressions of himself on them : or it is unworthy of him to

do any thing in vain. 2. On the other hand, these propositions which disclose the secret purposes or knowledge of God, and things hid in it, that lie within the reach of no mortal, or perhaps created understanding, without revelation, must make a more vivid and lively impression on our minds, as illuminating it with the knowledge of things, whereto it was, and by its own reach for ever must remain, a stranger. 3. In like manner, truths wherein our eternal salvation, or present relief from incumbent trouble, is directly concerned, do more forcibly affect, and have a more powerful influence, than these which lie more remote from our present use, of how great advantage soever in their proper place they may be. The moon, which points out my way in the night, guides me and saves me from losing myself or way, at that time affects me more than the light of the sun, which I have formerly seen, but do not now behold, though the moon comparatively has no light, and borrows that which it hath from the sun : In like manner, truths in themselves of less importance, and which derive all their glory from those that are more important, yet, when they suit my present case affect me more, and their evidence appears greater. " Every thing is beautiful in its season." That there is such a city as Jerusalem, or that there was such a one, the scripture tells us. Of this we are otherwise informed, and are not likely to be tempted as to its truth, this however, is told us in the word, and this therefore we are to receive on testimony of the word ; but the faith of it is not so difficult, on accounts mentioned ; it is not told but with respect to some particular scope, and we have only an additional security about it. Hereon our minds are not so illuminated, influenced and affected with the discovery, as when God tells us, he " was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." The discovery of this fills us with a sense of the glory of God, hitherto unknown, and that lay far out of the reach of vulgar eyes, or any mortal to discover, without divine revelation. And therefore the discovery affects more. Again, I am perplexed about through-bearance in some particular strait, a promise of grace to help in it, though it is of less importance than the fore-mentioned discovery of reconciliation, and has no efficacy, light or glory, save what it derives from the former, yet coming in the season wherein I am wholly exercised about it, and the case whereto it relates, it affects me more. 4. Where the same truth is at the same time discovered by different lights, it is not easy for persons, if not very discerning and attentive, to understand the distinct and particular influence of the several lights, such as that of natural light, human testimony and revelation ; and yet each of them have their own particular use, which upon its extinction would appear by the defect we would feel.

VI. With respect to truths of high importance, otherwise unknown, which affect our minds with the enriching light of things, by us formerly not known or knowable, and which by the suitableness to present circumstances, or exercise do more strongly affect with a sense of the divine authority, illuminate the mind, there is no difficulty, save in the cases afterwards to be taken notice of, or the like.

VII. As to these truths and scripture propositions which relate to things not so remote from our apprehensions, or are not so suitable to our circumstances, at present, or discover things of less importance to us, it is owned, that even real christians who have faith, or a spiritual discerning for ordinary, are not, upon hearing or reading them, struck or affected with so sensible, clear and affecting evidence of God, as they are in other

scriptures of a different nature and revelation, which arises from the nature of the truths in themselves, the manner and design of God in the delivery, our present circumstances, the weakness and imperfection of our faith, the incidental indispositions we are under, and other causes which may be easily collected from what has been formerly hinted in the preceding observations.

VIII. All this, notwithstanding the least considerable of these truths, has a sufficient evidence of the divine authority, that is, such an evidence as answers the design of God in them, and is able to determine the believer's assent, and oblige him to obey or submit, and is every way suitable to the weight that is to be laid on them, with respect to the scope they are mentioned for, and importance of the matter; which though at all times it is not equally discernible, for the reasons above mentioned, or others of an alike nature; yet in its proper season it is observed by judicious, observing and reflecting christians. As, for instance, when any of these truths, of the least apparent importance, are questioned by Satan or men, then the authority of God is felt to have that influence and awe upon the conscience of believers, as will not allow them to part with the least hoof or shred of divine truth, and will make them, in spite of all opposition, cleave to it, though it should cost them their life. Likewise, when the spirit of God is to apply those truths to the particular scope at which he aimed in asserting them in the book of God, then not only have they such evidence as influences assent and adherence, but emboldens the soul to lay that stress on them, which the case doth require.

IX. Whereas our present imperfect state and capacity, the nature of the things, and other circumstances, allow not of an evidence equally clear and great, as in other truths, the wisdom and goodness of God, in consideration of this to prevent the shaking, or at least failing of our faith, have as to these provided many ways for our security, as, 1. Though in the particular passages, such evidence shines not in themselves apart, yet there oft appears a beaming light, when they are presented in reference to the scope intended by God. 2. Other passages are joined with them, placed near them, and related to them, which have a further evidence of God; and though we cannot discern them when they are looked at abstractly, yet when we look to them in relation to these, on which they hang, and to which they are connected, we are satisfied. * And I conceive there may be an eye to this, in dropping doctrinal passages, and inserting them in scripture history. 3. This objection principally respects the Old Testament, as to the divine authority of which we are particularly secured by plain and evident testimonies in the New. 4. Sometimes with such truths there are direct assertions of the Lord's speaking of them joined, of which there are many instances in the Books of Moses; wherein it is expressly declared, that what was then enjoined, was by the particular command of God. 5. Believers for ordinary, being, in the reading of the word of God, made sensible of his authority, will not be easily brought to admit of any suspicion, that a book wherein God shows himself so evidently concerned, and owns, as to the bulk, to be from him, is or can by him be allowed to be in other places filled up with propositions or matters of a coarser alloy: and therefore they will rather question themselves, and their own ignorance, than impeach the divinity of the scriptures on this account.

X. Though no faulty obscurity is chargeable on the scriptures, as much of them, as in present circumstances, is of absolute necessity to believers, in order to their acceptable walking with God, being clearly revealed, yet

there are many truths, not understood by all, nor perhaps by any, therein inserted, to leave room for the diligence, trial of the faith of christians, their progress in knowledge, and other wise ends. Now till, in the use of appointed means, the spirit of God open to us the meaning of these scriptures, we cannot perceive the light and power that is in them : but whenever he opens these scriptures, that same light that discovers the meaning, will not fail to affect, and make our hearts burn within us, with the sense of divine light, authority and power. Of this the experience of the people of God, as they grow in knowledge, furnishes them daily with new instances, and therefore they do not stumble at the want of the present sense of this light, but are quickened to diligence, excited to frequent cries for opening of their eyes, that they may understand the wonders, that by the knowledge of other parts of the word, they are induced to believe couched in these parts, which yet they know not.

XI. As has been before more than insinuated, there are, in scripture, truths designed for, and suited to different persons, in different circumstances ; the book of God being designed for the use of the whole church, and all in it, in all stations, relations, cases, temptations and different circumstances, in which any are, have been in, or may be in. Now when God speaks to one, what he says cannot be so affecting to another, no wise in the same or like case ; though yet he may know somewhat of the Lord's voice in it. And the same is to be said as to the same person, with respect to different cases.

XII. It must be still minded, that though every part of scripture has in its proper place and degree, a sufficient evidence of the divine authority, yet the actual discerning of it depends very much upon the present state of the discerning power or faith of the christian, which discerns it or not, or discerns it more or less clearly, as it is most strong or weak, more free from accidental indispositions, outward temptations, or more affected by them. And the same is to be said, as to its being more or less intently and orderly applied to the observation of the evidence of God in the word.

XIII. Yet whereas they, who are once renewed, do continue still children of the light, and have a spiritual capacity of discerning the Lord's voice from that of a stranger, they do for ordinary, in the scriptures, find the authority of God evidencing itself suitably to the particular exigence of their particular cases, where the truths that occur are not such, wherein their present faith or practice is immediately affected, or where the truths are such as to which, in their own abstract nature, no more is required save a bare assent, they being only inserted with respect to some other particular scope, where the truths are not presently assaulted, where they are not immediately called to hazard much upon them, or in other the like cases they are indeed less affected, but one way or other, from one thing or other, as much of God shines in them as is sufficient to engage to a present adherence, and some becoming reverence as to the oracles of God, which may in their season manifest their usefulness to us, and do at present manifest it to others. And where truths are of a different nature and importance, and suit present necessities, and require more distinct actings of faith or obedience, and we are called to lay more stress on them ; in that case the evidence of God shines more brightly. And scarce ever will a discerning and attentive christian, who is not grievously indisposed by some casual disorder, read the scriptures, or any considerable part of them, but some where or other, in the scope or particular words, and propositions,

or their contexture, some light will shine in upon the soul, enforcing a conviction, that God is in it of a truth.

XIV. When the faith of the Lord's people is assaulted as to the truth of the word ; when in difficult cases and duties they are called to lay much stress upon the word, and hazard as it were their all ; when they are distressed with particular and violent temptations, and need comfort ; when under spiritual decays, and God designs to restore them ; when newly brought in, and need to be confirmed ; when they are humble and diligent, and the Lord designs to reward them graciously, and encourage them to go on ; when difficulted to find duty, and waiting on the Lord for light in cases of more than usual importance ; when the Lord has a mind to carry any one to peculiar degrees of holiness and grace, and employ them in special services ; and, in a word, wherever any extraordinary exigence requires, then the Lord opens his people's ears, removes what intercepts the discoveries of his mind, fixes their ear to hear, and speaks the word distinctly, powerfully and sweetly to the soul, and gives them in and by it, such a taste of his goodness, wisdom and power, and experiences of his authority in the word, gracious design and hand in its application at present, as fills the soul with the riches and full assurance of faith, peace, joy, and stedfastness in believing.

PROP. XII.

“ Whereas there are different readings of particular places in ancient copies, and places wrong translated in our versions, it may be pretended, that we are, or may be imposed upon, and assent to truths, or rather to propositions, not of a divine original, casually crept into our copies of the original, or translation. In answer hereto, the foregoing ground of faith lays a sufficient bottom for the satisfaction of christians, in so far as their case and particular temptations require.”

To clear this a little, I shall offer the ensuing remarks.

I. Where the authority of God evidences itself in the way above explained, and confirmed to the mind, believers have a stable and sure foundation for their faith, whether they use translations or the originals, though it must be allowed, where persons are capable of it, the originals are most satisfying. And this is plainly the case, as all real christians from certain experience know, as to all the truths of the greatest importance, and whereon our faith or obedience are more immediately or directly concerned : So that as to these there is no room left for this objection.

II. The wisdom of God has so carefully provided for the security and stability of our faith, as to particular truths of any considerable importance, against pretences of this, or of a like nature, that our faith rests not upon the evidence of one single testimony, but such truths upon a variety of occasions are often repeated, and our faith leans upon them, not only as thus frequently repeated, but cleared and confirmed by their connection to other truths, which infer them and the whole analogy of faith, or current of the scriptures, with respect to that which is the principal design of God. So that we are in no hazard of being deprived of any one truth, of any considerable influence, in faith or practice by pretended corruptions, or wrong translations. The famous Dr Owen, who had considered the whole various readings, and well knew the failures of particular translations, observes, that were all the various readings added to the worst and most faulty trans-

lation, the church of God would not sustain by it the loss of one important truth.

III. Where any person is particularly concerned to be satisfied which is the right reading of any particular passage, and how it ought to be translated, they may, by the help of the ministers of the gospel, such of them as are particularly fitted with skill in such matters, and by the endeavours of learned men, who have particularly considered every one of these passages in a humble dependence on God for the blessing of these means, which the wise God has multiplied, since difficulties of this sort begun to create any trouble to the faith of his people; by these means, I say, joined with an eye to the Lord, they may come to be particularly satisfied; "If any man do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it is of God."

IV. Where there is not access to these means, which will not readily happen to persons called to such exercise, which rarely befalls the vulgar sort of christians; yet the Lord can easily relieve the person thus exercised by evidencing his authority to the conscience in a satisfying light, or by enabling him to wait for light until the solution come, or by removing the temptation, when it becomes too strong, or by leading him to rest in the particular truth, as secured by other passages not questioned, or by some such like way.

V. The difficulty as to translations is really of less importance: and as to the other about pretended corruptions, ordinary christians, whose consciences are daily affected with the evidence of God's authority in the word, and his owning it as his word, speaking by it to them, and conveying divine influences of light, life and comfort, will not fear or entertain any suspicion so unworthy of God, as that he could allow the word he thus owns, under a pretence of his authority, to impose on them. Assertions of human extract, are not of any ill consequence to their faith or obedience.

VI. I shall only subjoin this one observation, that enemies gain more by proposing these pretended corruptions *in cumulo*, and in such a bulky way as to altright christians who are capable of such objections, than by insisting upon any particular one, and attempts to prove them of equal authority with the reading, retained in the approved originals. Their unsuccessfulness in endeavours of this last sort discovers, that there is really nothing of weight in that so much noised objection about various readings: for if there were any such readings as could really make any considerable alteration, and were supported with any authority able to cope with the received readings, why do they not produce these? Others are of no consideration. These only are to be regarded; and of this sort, there are but very few, that the most impudent dare pretend: and these few have been disproved and disallowed by persons of equal capacity and learning: but to leave this, which is above the ordinary sort of christians, the Lord's people, to whom he has evidenced his own authority, in the way above mentioned, will be moved with none of these things, they will forego the word, but retain it as their life, and pay respect to it as the word of God; and they have good reason to do so.

I shall now observe hence,

I. How justly divine faith may be said to be infallible, as standing on an infallible ground, the faithfulness and truth of God in the word. Through darkness we may sometimes not discern, through negligence not observe, or through the force of temptations interposing betwixt us and it, we may lose sight of the evidence of this authority; and so our faith may shake or fail.

But while it fixes on this, it cannot fail, though we may quit, or by violence be beat off; the ground is firm, and cannot fail, the scriptures cannot be broken.

II. Hence it is, that the meanest and weakest believers, who know nothing of the props others have to support them, do cleave as firmly to the word, run with all courage and as much cheerfulness, all hazards for it, to the loss of whatever is dear to them, life not excepted, for the word as the most judicious divine, and ofttimes they are much more firm. This is upon no other grounds accountable. This reason of faith is as much exposed to them as to the most learned.

III. All objections arising against this ground of faith, will be easily solved if we consider, 1. That the scriptures are a relief provided by sovereign grace, for those of the race of fallen man, to whom God designs mercy, and so God was not obliged to adjust it in all respects to the natural capacities of men in their present state; but it was meet that the word should be so writ, that room should be left for the discoveries of the sovereignty of grace, and the other means God designed to make use of in subserviency to the word. It was not meet or necessary that all should be so proposed, as to lie open to men without the assistance of the spirit, and without the ministry of the word. 2. The word was not designed alone to conduct us, but God has given the spirit with the word, who teaches us in and by it as he sees meet. 3. The word is designed to be a rule to all ages, and therefore it was not meet or necessary, that what concerns persons in one age should be equally exposed in its meaning unto other persons, who lived in a different time. It is sufficient, that in every age, what concerns that time, lie so open, that in the use of the means of God's appointment, they may reach that wherein they are concerned. 4. The word was designed for persons of different stations, capacities and cases, who ought to rest satisfied in the obvious discoveries of what concerns them, in their own particular circumstances, and is required to be believed and obeyed more particularly in a way of duty, of them, though they cannot see so clearly what belongs to others in different circumstances. 5. God has not systematically and separately discoursed all particular cases under distinct heads, but to leave room for the conduct of the spirit for exciting the diligence of christians to study the whole scriptures, and for other reasons obvious to infinite wisdom, he has digested them in a method, more congruous to these wise ends. 6. The Lord designing the exercise of the faith of his own, and to humble them, and to drive them to a dependence on him, and to punish the wicked, and give them who will stumble at the ways of God, somewhat to break their neck on, he has digested them so, as that there may be occasions, though always without fault on God's part, for all those ends: "Wisdom will be justified of her children," and to some he speaks in parables, "that seeing they may not see."

MODEST INQUIRY

WHETHER

REGENERATION OR JUSTIFICATION HAS THE PRECEDENCY

IN ORDER OF NATURE.

I.

The question stated.

THE question is, whether justification, which compriseth absolution from guilt, forgiveness of sin, and gracious acceptation of our persons, doth, in order of nature, precede the renovation of our natures by the spirit of Christ, the implantation of supernatural habits of grace, a principle of life, or the new creature? Or, on the other hand, are elect sinners first renewed, regenerated, and furnished with a principle of life, which, being excited through the influence of the spirit of life, accepts of Christ in the offer of the gospel, whereon justification follows in the same instant of time, yet a consequent in order of nature?

II.

Difficulties stated on either hand.

IF regeneration is said to precede justification, then the ensuing difficulties offer.

1. How is it consistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God, to impart his image to a sinner, yet under the curse? This respects God's act, and seems to fix an incongruity on him. 2. How can it be conceived that a soul yet under wrath and the curse, is dignified with the image of God? This seems to be inconsistent, if we look at the things themselves, and that order, which their nature leads to. 3. Does not this make the object of justification to be a holy renewed saint, and not an ungodly sinner, according to Rom. iv. 5. 4. How can the soul be partaker of spiritual life, before its union with Christ, the fountain of life? Union is by faith, by which we come to Christ for life: but this renders it needless, because we have life before union. 5. Does not this make the collation of the spirit antecedent to union and faith? And yet by faith we receive the spirit, Gal. iii. 14. 6. Does not this suppose the heart to be purified before faith, while yet it is purified by faith? Acts xv. 9. 7. Is not the new creature begot by the "immortal seed of the word?" Now, can the word operate any other way than by the interveniency of faith receiving it?

If, on the other hand, justification is said so precede, the difficulties are many, which I need not stand to repeat at length; only,

1. How will this accord with the doctrine of the reformed churches and divines, that harmoniously teach the contrary? And how does it agree

with our confession and catechisms, which we sign and assent to? particularly, where they treat of effectual calling. 2. How can we conceive the acts of life, where there is no abiding principle whence they should proceed? The acts of faith without the spirit of faith? 3. How can we understand an unrenewed soul to be the subject of this noblest act of faith that unites to Christ, and by which we are justified? I speak of it objectively, and interested in him and his benefits? 4. Whereas there are many actings in all the faculties implied in justifying faith, it may be inquired, how can it be understood that the whole soul, in all its powers, should thus, before it is renewed, harmoniously and uniformly go out toward the Lord, assenting to the record concerning him, choosing, approving and resting in him? 5. Can the best of fruit be produced without a root? These and many such difficulties, commonly enough known and alleged, might be insisted on: but I think it needless. These may serve for a specimen.

III.

A scheme of principles exhibited for the vindication of the commonly received opinion, viz. That though they are agreed on all hands, to be at one and the same time; yet regeneration in order of nature precedes justification.

Prob. 1.—I. A DESIGN being laid in the decree of God to save elect sinners, to the praise of grace, by Jesus Christ, they were, in the covenant of redemption, given to the Son. The law of works, by an act of sovereignty, was relaxed, not as to its obligation simply, but in so far as it respected man himself, as the subject of the obligation to doing or suffering; nor was the law simply relaxed as it obliged man, even elect sinners, to do or obey; but in so far as it obliged them to obey, in order to exemption from the curse, and a title to life. And he, to whom elect sinners were thus given, by the designation of the Father and his own consent, was substituted in the room of elect sinners, and thereby came under an obligation in their stead, to answer the demands of the law as to what it required of them, in order to avoid its curse, and entitled to the promised blessings; or shortly, he became obliged to fulfil its demands, as it was a covenant in their stead. Moreover, he undertook, as mediator, by the price of his blood, to purchase complete redemption for them, and all things belonging necessarily to it.

Cor. My design requires not a nice stating of the foregoing truths generally owned amongst the orthodox; only I observe that, from all this, the purpose of the Father, his giving elect sinners to Christ, his substitution of him in their room, and the Son's acceptance; some relation betwixt him and them doth result, which may as fitly be designed by the name of a union, as any word or name I know to assign. It is granted that this is not that complete mystical union,* whereby we are actually grafted into him as branches into the tree, whether it shall be called a legal or federal, fundamental or fountain union, as our divines differently term it, I am not concerned. Yet certain it is that such a relation there is, and that it is the fountain of all subsequent advantages to the elect.

II. This relaxation of the law as to the original subject of its obligation,

* Rutter on the Covenant, pag. 211. Witsii Dissert. Iren. p. 71. Owen Vind. and Append. pag. 42.

in so far as it was the condition of the covenant of works, substitution of Christ and his voluntary subjection to that obligation, &c. being all, in the purpose of God, and transactions of the Father and Son, in the covenant of redemption, expressly and directly designed for them who were given of the Father, it follows plainly, that, immediately upon Christ's yielding of the satisfaction demanded, paying the price, or his engagement (for that is equivalent where the undertaker could not, nor would fail) there did result a right for them to freedom from the curse, and to all the benefits of his purchase. This right is not what the lawyers call *Jus in Re*, but *Jus ad Rem*. It is more properly said, there is a right for them, than they have a right; since they know not of it; it is not actionable by them, nor is it actually vested in their person. Yet with God it is righteous, that they for whom justice is satisfied, a price paid, redemption is purchased, &c. should at the time and in the order agreed on, be put in actual possession of those privileges.* The use of this will appear in due time.

The foundation of this assertion lies in this plain scripture truth, viz. That though the ultimate design of all is the glory of the adorable Trinity: yet the principal, subordinate, proper, and immediate design of Father and Son in the undertaking, exhibition of Christ in the flesh, his obedience and death, under all considerations of it, as a satisfaction, atonement, price and ransom, was not to obtain liberty for the Father, without injury to his justice, to bestow; or a right to the Son to redemption and the benefits of it that he might bestow them on whom, and on what terms he saw meet: but the salvation of sinners, and the redemption of persons. The whole not only includes a remote respect to sinners: but the salvation of persons being designed, the designation of Christ to the work of redemption, &c. his whole mediatory office, and his undertaking and execution of it, "primarily aimed at the salvation of sinners. It was not the impetration of the effects absolutely, but the salvation of lost sinners by them that was primarily in view. This is plain from the consideration, that the whole of the mediation of Christ was pursuant to the purpose of God, with respect to the salvation of sinners. The scripture speaks not of the absolute procurement of these things; but it constantly includes a direct respect to sinners, to their personal advantage. The Father sent—the Son came to "save them that were lost,"—our sins were laid on him. He "was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He was made "Lord of the dead and the living;" or, which is the same, "had power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life" to as many as were given him of the Father. In a word, they, whoever they were, for whom Christ died, of which we dispute not now, being in the design, and all being for them, with a direct and immediate respect to their advantage, a right there, must result for them. This is opposed by universalists, because it undermines the foundation of their whole fabric, viz. That the effect wherein the death of Christ, as a satisfaction, ransom or price, did terminate, was the procurement of the things, or impetration of them, and not the advantage of persons by the application of them. But this must not make us forego what the whole tenor of the scripture uniformly bears witness to. The charge of Antinomianism will be answered by the next proposition.

III. Pardon, absolution from guilt, and all those saving blessings Christ

* See Dr Owen as to this, against Baxter in his death of Christ, pag. 68. and Vindic. Evau. Append. p. 30.

purchased *sub termino*, that is, It was agreed in the contract, whereby Christ was constituted surety and mediator, that those blessings should be actually given out to each of them, for whom they were designed respectively in their several generations, in the season and order prefixed by God, to the praise of his glorious grace.

Cor. Hence we see that the elect can lay no claim to any thing, on account of Christ's satisfaction or purchase, but at the time, and in the order agreed on, and therefore, till then, in themselves, they are in no better case than others.

Cor. Hence also we learn the true reason of this, that they, for whom satisfaction is made, a ransom paid, &c. do yet continue under the curse or wrath of God, as well as others. It is not because Christ paid not the *idem*, the same in specie or kind, that was due from sinners, as Baxter fondly supposes; but the true reason is, that all these privileges, being contrived and provided by a concert betwixt the Father and Son, without the sinner's knowledge, or any contribution of counsel, performance, or consent, it did belong to them who had brought about all this, by the best of rights, to give out, at what time or in what order they pleased, the good things designed, which was accordingly fixed in the covenant of redemption, all being adjusted as to order and time.

IV. Christ Jesus, the mediator, immediately upon the performance of what was demanded of him, was fully discharged, in so far as he stood himself obliged, and to him, as trustee appointed by the Father, and head of those given to him, for whom he gave his life a ransom; the management of that right purchased for them by his blood, and confirmed also thereby to them, and which, till the time of their actual investiture, is lodged in the hand of the righteousness and faithfulness of God; the management of this right, I say, for their behoof, was wholly committed to him, and access allowed him at the respective terms agreed on, to sue it out, claim and demand the outgiving of the privileges, and the investing of the persons with the actual right to them, in the order agreed on, and in due season, to make the claim, crave this at the hand of the righteousness and faithfulness of God; is the design of his intercession or appearing in the holiest with his own blood, which is the ground of his claim. This trust and province he faithfully manages. The faithful advocate never fails, in due season, to put in his claim.

Cor. This discharge of our debt to our surety, though it is not our justification properly and strictly so called; yet our divines, Charnock, Witsius, &c. do not unfitly term it our fundamental or general justification: because it was for us he suffered and paid the ransom, and offered this oblation. The right and privileges purchased and confirmed by his death, were for us. And the provision made for the conveyance of this right and privileges respects us, and the conveyance of right and possession is hereby absolutely secured, though meanwhile, in ourselves, we are as before, till the term agreed on come.

V. When the term prefixed, for the actual outgiving of privileges, draws on, it is so ordered, that the elect soul is summoned, at the instance of the justice and law of God, for his violation of the law. The charge is enforced on his conscience; God, in the word's discoveries of him, through the spirit's influence, joining with the word, is sisted as judge. His presence, majesty, justice and holiness are realised to the sinner, and he stands now in this lower court, at God's tribunal erected there. He is beat from

denials, pleas, extenuations, shifts or evasions, that he can devise : whereon he stands at this lower tribunal before God, self-convicted, and with his mouth stopped.

VI. If any sentence should pass, while matters stand thus, it must unavoidably be a sentence of condemnation. The charge is proved, the libel is relevant, all pleas made are repelled justly, nay, past from by the panel. But the term being now come, the faithful Advocate, that will lose none of his, steps in, appears in the higher house, where he is entered with his own blood, and puts in his claim, on behalf of the criminal arraigned before God's tribunal below, to this purpose, though not in such words, if in words at all I inquire not. "This poor criminal was thine by creation, thy prisoner by his rebellion : but thou gavest him to me. I bore the curse of the law, due to his sins, for him, behold my wounds ! I purchased all saving blessings, lo ! there is my blood ! the price of redemption. The term is come. I crave therefore that, in consideration of what I have done and suffered, he be acquitted, purchased grace given out to enable him to put in his claim at the bar, where he now stands personally convicted : and, finally, that thereon he be absolved, accepted, and entered to orderly possession of all purchased privileges." Christ's appearance in the holiest for us must be allowed to import no less by any, who own the orthodox doctrine, as to Christ's oblation and intercession, and their mutual relation.

Cor. Christ's intercession, though it is represented as a prayer ; yet it is not strictly so ; but in as far as concerns himself, it is a claim of right, though as other legal claims, out of a regard to the majesty of the judge, it is managed in form of a prayer, or what is equivalent thereto ; or rather it is represented in condescension to our capacity, after this manner ; the way of transacting things in heaven, betwixt the glorious judge and advocate being above our reach.

VII. This plea being made above, on behalf of the sinner convicted at God's tribunal below is admitted, and the admission of it, in what manner soever it is done, imports, 1. A reckoning of Christ to the criminal, or an acknowledgment that his undertaking respected this sinner, now pursued by the law of God, before God's tribunal on earth. 2. An acknowledgment of the dueness, or, to speak more properly, an acknowledgment that absolution is of right due on account of satisfaction made, and all other privileges on account of the price paid. 3. In consideration of the one and the other, order is, as it were, given out (I speak after our manner of conceiving and expressing what is above our reach) for the actual putting the sinner in possession of these advantages respectively.

This is what Dr Owen calls absolution in heaven, before believing. And it is, as it were, a second step, moment, instant, or, as Witsius speaks, *Articulus* of the sinner's justification. But this being of great moment, for clearing the difficulties above mentioned, we must illustrate and confirm it. Observe,

1. Though this, in order of nature, precedes any grace in the sinner ; yet this regeneration, believing and justification are all at one and the same instant of time.

2. However in our way of expressing the deep things of God, and for our more easy conception, we are obliged to think and speak of each of these as distinct acts ; yet we pretend not to determine the manner how these things are done, and such a plea is made, it is admitted, and its admission imports what we have mentioned.

3. This is no new nor singular opinion. Many of our old divines have gone further in their expressions: but what we have pleaded for, is no more than the native consequence of agreed truths before laid down. Dr Owen,* who was remote enough from novelties, asserts this at length, and defends it against Baxter, in his discourse of the death of Christ, and appendix to *Vindicia Evangelicæ*. † And Witsius, in his *Dissertationes Irenicæ*, pleads for it.

4. Besides the confirmation given to it, by the foregoing propositions, unavoidably leading to this, we may add, that 1. This is the order the scripture directs us to, Rom. viii. 32. Christ is first delivered for us, then given to us, then with him all other things. 2. The giving out of the first grace, viz. Faith, in scripture is declared to be an act of righteousness, 2. Pet. iii. 3. The saints are said to obtain faith through the righteousness of God. But this it can no otherwise be, but in consideration of the right obtained by Christ, and as it proceeds upon an antecedent admission of that on their behalf, which is all that is intended. Again, 3. It is expressly asserted, that "it is given us on the behalf of Christ to believe," Phil. i. 29., or for his sake. Now this imports, that God in giving it, has a regard to what Christ has done for them, and that he thereon gives it out, as what is of right due, on consideration of that. And this is all that is intended. 4. How comes the grace of faith, for example, to be given to Peter, and not to Judas for Christ's sake? Is it not that God looks upon Christ, as standing under another relation to Peter than to Judas? and what is this, but to reckon him to the one and not to the other? Dr Owen adds, that perhaps this may be what is intended by the "justification of the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5. But as he is not peremptory, so neither shall I be.

5. Yet I say, this is not justification of the sinner, though it is a step to it and issues in it. And that 1. Because it is not, at least, ordinarily so called in scripture. 2. This is a sentence past, it is true, by God, but not in that court where the sinner stands personally arraigned. 3. This act terminates not on the sinner. In itself it goes no further than, as it were, to speak after our manner, a warrant for the outgiving of grace, to put the sinner in case to make his plea, where he now stands convicted. The sinner is as before, till this is executed, which is at the very same instant. I confess,

Cor. This reckoning of Christ to us, makes, as it were, a second step or advance toward that complete union designed.

VIII. This act being past in his favour, who now trembles at the bar, knowing nothing of it, is instantly executed. The spirit of Christ takes possession, creates a principle of grace in the soul; and in the wise and exact providence of God, Christ in the promise is held forth as the ordinance of God for the salvation of sinners, and particularly as the propitiation. The poor sinner himself, through the enlightening, enlivening, and quickening influence of the same spirit, in that very instant, closes with and accepts of Christ as his righteousness.

IX. Hereon immediately God the judge acquits the impanneled sinner, sisted before him personally, and receives him into favour, only on account of Christ and his righteousness imputed to him; the nature of which is properly called justification. We need not enquire into it, being commonly discoursed of.

* Dr. Owen on the death of Christ, p. 68. &c.
Cap. 110. p. 130.

† Vind. Evan. App. Wits.

X. This justification, properly so called, differs vastly from that absolute in heaven formerly mentioned. For,

1. The former act did not reach the sinner himself: but now the sinner is personally acquitted by an act of God, terminated in the sinner's conscience. For, 2. In this sentence, the plea of justice and law against the sinner managed in his conscience is declared void, and let fall for ever; so that none ever can again, by warrant from God, insist against the justified sinner, upon that charge, to the disturbance of his peace, or his condemnation. I deny not that a litigious accuser of the brethren, and with him his informed conscience, may abuse this, to give the poor creature trouble. But, 3. In this sentence, and by it, there is a claimable defence, that justly may, and instantly should be, taken hold of, and pleaded for the relief of the conscience, against all disturbances of this nature. And this with the former clears what is meant by terminated in conscience. 4. The sinner by this has immediate access to peace with God and his favour: though sometimes he cannot at first recover so soon out of the fright his former condition casts him in, as immediately to use it. 5. This act, as any one may see, is an act passed here on earth, though by God, immediately and directly respecting the sinner himself sisted before God, as above; whereas all former acts reached not himself personally, but did terminate on Christ, our head and advocate, for the behoof of sinners.

XI. By the foregoing propositions it appears, that though the complete mystical union, betwixt Christ and elect sinners, is not before faith; yet there are several sorts of unions before it, and each of them attended with its own special use and influence. Nor is there any danger of Antinomianism here. The most zealous opposers of Antinomians grant all that I advance. Dr Williams in particular, asserts all that I design most expressly;* and our divines say the same.

1. Christ and they are one in the degree: which yet infers nothing, says Witsius, "but that in time they shall be actually united."† 2. They are one federally, or as others express it, legally, by virtue of the covenant of redemption, wherein Christ is constituted head of the elect, and surety substitute in their stead; which yet infers no present alteration in their state, but leaves them as before, until in the order agreed on in that transaction, they are brought out of it. 3. They are one in nature. Christ taking part with the children herein, that he might redeem them, being our near kinsman. 4. They are one really, though upon their part only passively, when the spirit of Christ in his name, takes possession of, and unites them to Christ. There are two bonds of union; the spirit on the part of Christ, and faith on ours. Union must begin on his part; and his taking hold on us is the cause of our taking hold of him, and so must be in order of nature, before. These things are not contested, and yet are of chief use in the business in hand.

XII. It is likewise apparent, from what has been discoursed, that the sinner's discharge advances by steps; some of which do precede faith.

There is that fundamental or general justification, as Charnock and Witsius call it, when Christ was discharged.‡ This is in time antecedent to justification. 2. There is that absolute in heaven, which we have cleared and confirmed above. This is not in time, but in order of nature only,

* Gospel Truth stated. cap. xi. p. 92. † Wits. Dissert. Iren. cap. 6. part, 1, 2, 3.

‡ Wits. ubi. sub. cap. 10. §. 2, 3, 4.

antecedent to faith. 3. There is justification strictly and properly so called, which immediately follows faith.

IV.

The principles more largely laid down, explained and confirmed above, more briefly summed up, and offered in a joint view, that their influence into the resolution of the above-mentioned difficulties may more clearly appear.

Prop. I. CHRIST JESUS, in the covenant of redemption, was substituted, and did substitute himself head, surety, and mediator, for those given to him of the Father, obliging thereby himself to make satisfaction to justice in their stead, and purchase complete redemption for them, by his bearing the curse for them to purchase to them all saving blessings.

II. Immediately upon his performance, or engagement equivalent to performance, a right for those, given to him, to all these blessings, did result, that is, it became righteous with God to give, under the restriction just now to be mentioned, a right to and possession of all those things procured for them, by the satisfaction, oblation and price of redemption above-mentioned.

III. All these things were purchased *sub termino*, that is, to be actually given out to the persons concerned, at a time, and in an order agreed on, betwixt Father and Son, who were the contrivers and managers of this whole matter.

IV. Immediately upon performance of what he obliged himself to, Christ was discharged as to his own obligation, and actually instated in the possession of what was promised himself. The right purchased for sinners, being lodged safely in the hand of the righteousness and faithfulness of God, action was allowed him, as their head and trustee, for their actual investiture, with right to the possession of all in the time and order agreed on.

V. When this term approaches, the sinner on earth, by a summons at the instance of injured justice, is sisted before the tribunal of God here below, where God is presented to him in his majesty and holiness, as judge by the word and spirit; and here, before God, he is charged, convicted, and his mouth stopped.

VI. The Lord Jesus Christ, the vigilant and faithful advocate, knowing fully the poor sinner's case, viz. That "he is now on earth arraigned before God's tribunal, and duly convicted there, and that he cannot orderly be discharged, but upon a plea, wherein he is really and actually interested, and his interest evinced before the judge in that court, where now he stands personally sisted." The blessed advocate knowing, I say, this to be the case, and that term being now come, he moves his action in the holiest, in the court, before the same judge, on behalf of the sinner, where he is entered with his own blood.

VII. This action is admitted, his plea sustained, and sentence passes thereon, which issues not first or immediately in the sinner's discharge, but only in what is preparatory thereto, viz. The present outgiving of what is necessary to instate the sinner, in an actual and actionable plea, and enable him to put in an orderly claim for a discharge, where he is now arraigned, that is, the sending of the spirit to work regeneration, and thereby enable him to accept Christ freely offered in the gospel, by faith; by which being united to Christ, his righteousness becomes pleadable and is presented. The sustaining of Christ's action in the higher court, is that

which we call absolution in heaven, which has been explained and confirmed above.

VIII. Christ's action being sustained in the higher court, though it does not of itself liberate the sinner immediately; yet the advantage of this sentence in Christ's favour, for the sinner's behoof, is that, 1. The curse of the law cannot be alleged against the outgoing and actual collation of the spirit of grace, or faith in particular; this being instructed, that Christ has borne it for the panel. 2. These things being demanded, and a price paid for them, they instantly are ordered for the sinner, as what cannot of right be denied, in consideration of the plea now made in due time. 3. Immediately hereon, the Holy Spirit in Christ's name executes this, takes possession, enables to believe, and makes the poor sinner believe, working faith in principle and act, and by this mystical union begun by the spirit's entrance, is now completed by faith's closing with Christ, and making him its plea.

IX. Immediately hereon, God justifies the sinner, by an act terminating on his conscience, or on him personally considered, freeing him all righteous pursuit, upon the charge now alleged, constituting him free, and accepting him into favour, allowing him to plead this acquaintance against all accusations, Rom. viii. 33, 34.

V.

Application of the foregoing principles, for removing of the above-mentioned objections, and other things suggested to the same purpose.

If the satisfaction of the mind in a full clearing of the difficulties had not been aimed at, short answers without such a process, might have served most of them: but the way being now prepared, we shall directly answer them.

Obj. 1. How is it consistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God to give out his spirit, stamp his image on a sinner yet under the curse? for it is manifest, that in the sight of God, the sinner is still to be considered as such, until he be justified.

Ans. 1. Those of the opposite opinion, at least, such of them as we have principally in view, are burdened with the same difficulties. The act of justifying faith, being an effect of special grace, wrought in the soul of a sinner, antecedently in *ordine considerationis*, or *naturæ* to justification, the same difficulty may be moved about the one as the other. How comes God to send his Spirit to work faith in a sinner, yet under the curse?

2. Admitting what has been said above, as to the claim put in by the blessed intercessor, and God's admittance of it, there is no difficulty at all in the business to conceive, that God granting himself satisfied, as to the criminal's sins, admitting a price of redemption paid for all saving blessings, in consideration of that satisfaction and that price, made and paid, and the benefit of it orderly claimed, in due season, gives out what is at present necessary, for instating him in the actual right, to full and personal absolution. God hereon giving out those privileges, looks on the sinner indeed as yet under the curse; but withal, as for whom that curse was borne, and to whom he is, by virtue of his transaction with Christ, who was made a curse for him, obliged to collate what was purchased, in order to his personal or penary discharge.

Obj. II. It is alleged, that this is contrary to that order, that the very nature of things directs to, that a sinner yet under the curse, should be stamped with the image of God, or that one dignified with this image should be under the curse? First, wrath would be removed, a right given, and then privileges. This order the nature of things directs to.

Ans. 1. There were some difficulties here, if matters stood so for some time: but both being at the same instant, it is scarce worth while to debate it. 2. Allowing it absurd to imagine, that one under the curse simply, should be dignified with the image of God; yet it is not so, that a sinner for whom satisfaction is made and admitted, as above, and this privilege purchased should be thus dignified in order to enable him to put in, at that very instant, a claim to a personal and plenary discharge. 3. The first result of Christ's death being the satisfaction of justice, for our offences, according to our way of conceiving, the order of things is sufficiently hereby secured, in as much as there is no blessing imparted, but upon satisfaction first made, and a price paid. As to the order of the investiture of the persons with right, and possessing the persons of the privileges, we must allow God to be the best judge.

Obj. III. This makes the object of God's justifying act to be, not an ungodly sinner, but a renewed saint, contrary to Rom. iv. 5. And consequently the offer of remission is to saints and not to sinners. This being much insisted on by some, we shall consider it the more largely.

Ans. 1. It is observable in scripture, that no man is termed righteous or unrighteous, godly or ungodly, merely on account of habitual righteousness, these denominations always respect acts. He that doth righteousness is righteous. Now the person at the instant of justification is one, all whose former actings have been ungodly, and who antecedently to his justification has not done any works of righteousness. 2. This expression being here used with respect to justification, it must be taken in that sense, that relates to the business in hand, and he is to be deemed ungodly, who has no godliness, that the judge can admit in judgment, as a ground of justification. In the eye of the law he is ungodly, have what he will, and as to this business. Here then, and in a law-sense, he is ungodly, having no plea, but standing convict, with his mouth stopped. 3. According to the above-mentioned scheme, he can have no eye to any thing in himself, as contributing to his justification, either habitual or actual. For, 1. Habitual grace is not discernible in itself, but only in its actings. 2. There is no act of grace, previous, in any instant of time, to justifying faith. And, 3. At that very instant he is justified. Whence it is evident, that he can discern no grace in himself, till he is justified, and so can lay no stress on any. 4. It is hence evident, that faith is the outgoing of the soul of a poor sinner convicted of his own ungodliness, that sees nothing in himself, but sin and guilt, after Christ for righteousness, and who is fully satisfied, that if God enter into judgment with him, upon his own godliness, he has none at all, no acts of righteousness, that can be admitted, much less a complete righteousness; yea, on the contrary, he is all guilt, sin, and defilement. 5. Nor can the judge, in justification, have regard to it. Were he to proceed upon habitual holiness, this would not pass according to the rule; the renovation being but in part. And for acts, the sinner has none. So if sentence should pass upon him, with respect to this, the judge could not avoid to condemn him. He must legally find him ungodly, and as such condemn him. 6. I may add, when God is said to justify the ungodly, this justifying is not restricted to one precise action. All agree, it takes in the imputation of

Christ and his righteousness, and not merely the act of acquittance thereon, which the sound of the word seems to import. Take it in this latitude, as I see no reason why we may not, and then the first instance of the imputation of Christ, as we have heard above, is in order of nature, before either faith or regeneration, as we have cleared above : though formal imputation and justification is consequent hereto. 7. From all this, it is evident, that this account leaves no room to ministers to insinuate to their people, that they must not adventure by faith to betake themselves to Christ's righteousness, till they see such and such qualifications in themselves, regeneration, repentance or the like, which is the danger that the movers of this objection seem very apprehensive of ; and to avoid which, some of them have used expressions obnoxious enough to misconstruction. The minister dealing with the convinced sinner is not to bid him look inward, to see whether he be regenerated, and truly repents ; and if he finds not these, not to expect justification, or go to Christ for it. Such an inquiry, before justification, is vain and preposterous, and it is impossible ever to believe on these terms : but he is with the apostle, Acts xvi. directly to press, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." And, on the other hand, the sinner, like the poor jailor, without any such previous inquiry for qualifications in himself, should directly cling to Christ for righteousness, as one altogether lost in himself, and destitute of any qualifications that can avail him. And yet all this is without prejudice to ministers pressing conversion, repentance and faith, at the same time, as scripture precepts and examples require, and that without troubling themselves or people, with the disputes about the priority or posteriority of these, in order of nature, while it is agreed, they are all at the same time.* Hundreds have successfully preached the gospel, and many more received it, without ever concerning themselves in these questions.

Obj. IV. How can the soul be partaker of spiritual life before its union with Christ the fountain of life ? Union is by faith, by which we come to Christ for life ; but the order asserted renders this errand needless, because we have life before union.

Ans. 1. We have before cleared, that there are several kinds of union before complete mystical union. And as to this, orthodox divines, the most zealous opposers of antinomianism not excepted, do agree. And each of these unions are attended with special advantageous influences with respect to the elect. 2. To answer more closely, this passive union, as we called it above flowing from the spirit of Christ, its taking possession and working a vital principle, must, in order of nature, precede all acts of ours. Union must begin on his part. The first uniting act belongs to the living principle. The spirit enters into the body and actuates it, and the body, by life derived from the spirit, cleaves again to the soul. Just so, Christ the head, by his spirit, first actuates the dead sinner, and he thus, enlivened by this derived life, cleaves unto Christ again. 3. It is hence evident, that it has no life, but upon Christ's account, and what is derived from him. 4. It actively receives no life, till by faith, it is ingrafted in him, and comes to him. 5. Upon the sinner's coming to Christ, he receives the life of justification. He that is absolved, especially when in himself he deserved to die, receives his life, as he that is condemned loses his. 6. By faith we receive the life of sanctification, and that in a twofold sense : First. By our closing with Christ or coming to him, and the view that the soul then gets of him, the principle of life formed in the soul, gets life, is quickened, enlivened, and graces are

* Isai. lv. 7. Mark. i. 16. Acts. iii. 14.—v. 30, 31.—xxvi. 18.

put into action. Till this view is got, all lies as it were dead. Also, Second, By the continued exercise of faith, the increases and daily supplies of grace are conveyed for carrying on the life of sanctification. Thus it is betwixt the vine stock and ingrafted branch. The stock sends up quickening influences to the graft; the branch thus enlivened, first cleaves to the stock, and then the union being completed, and all conveyances opened, life in abundance is sent from the root, whereby it sends forth leaves, flowers, and fruit, each in their place and season. 7. The life of comfort is wholly by faith. And this is the life of life. There is no comfort but by faith. 8. Eternal life in right and possession are by faith. And this is sufficient to remove this difficulty.

Obj. V. Does not this make the collation of the spirit antecedent to faith? And yet it is by faith we receive the spirit, Gal. iii. 14.

Ans. 1. The spirit is received passively or improperly in order to build us up a meet habitation, lively temples, &c. and we being thus prepared, he is actively by faith received, as an inhabitant, to dwell in us, and act in us, as occasion requires. 2. They who choose the other side of the question, must allow, that the spirit is given to work faith, and so fall under their own argument.

Obj. VI. Does not this teach, that the heart is purified before faith, contrary to Acts xv. 9. that tells us the "heart is purified by faith?"

Ans. 1. Faith itself is, as Dr Owen well observes, a principal part of the restored image of God, and so of our purity. What the objectors answer to this may be applied to the other parts of the same image.* 2. What the spirit of God begins in renovation is progressively carried on by the exercise of faith, drawing purifying virtue from Christ. And this is the intent of the text.

Obj. VII. Is not the new creature begot by the immortal seed of the word? Or, are we not "born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet i. 23? Now how can the word have any effect, without the interueniency of faith? It does not profit, but as it is received by faith; therefore faith must be antecedent to the new nature.

Ans. 1. Not to take any advantage from the additional clause, fixing the sense of the word here mentioned, I ask, since faith comes by hearing the word of God, Rom. x. and the word can have no influence, but by faith, must not faith be before faith? The argument is the same. 2. The plain intent of such words, in both cases mentioned, and the like, is, that while, in the gospel dispensation, the word is objectively proposed, and the mind conversant about it, the spirit of the Lord, using it as the instrument, mean or channel of his influences, works faith, begets or forms the new creature.

* Dr Owen on the Spirit, page 290.

AN
INQUIRY

INTO

THE NATURE OF GOD'S ACT OF JUSTIFICATION.

It is generally agreed, amongst Orthodox Divines, that the word Justification, as it relates to the acquitment of a sinner, is to be understood in a forensic or law sense; and that, by it, we are to understand, a juridical act, whereby, God, as judge, upon the righteousness of Christ, does acquit the sinner, and accept him into favour. Now, whereas it is certain, that the sinner is really sisted at God's tribunal, and there accused by the law, conscience and Satan; and it is no less clear, that, upon his believing, he is acquitted, sentence passes in his favour, and he is justified by God; it may hereon modestly be inquired, "how God gives out sentence in the sinner's favour?" These things are not visibly transacted. Nor is the sentence audibly pronounced by any particular form of words, in the hearing of the sinner arraigned; much less in the hearing of by-standers. The question then is, "what is that act of God? Or how does he express that act absolvatory?"

This question is rarely, and but sparingly touched at by our divines, so far, at least, as I know. And therefore we conceive much modesty and sobriety is requisite, in the determination. Yet, some having delivered their opinion on this head, I hope it will be no presumption to inquire a little into it, providing always, that there be no attempt to be wise above what is written, which, *οὐ θεῶν*, we shall endeavour to guard against. I find there are different apprehensions of this matter among divines.

I. Some there are, who distinguish betwixt sentential and constitutive justification. The sinner, say they, immediately upon his believing, is constitutively justified, Rom. v. 19. by the gospel law. Again, he is sententially justified, when the Judge, at the day of judgment, passeth sentence upon him, acquitting him, according to the said law. Thus Mr Druman expressly delivers himself, denying flatly any act of God, as judge, acquitting any particular person in time. He admits of no act of God, but that which is rectoral or legislative, in the constitution of the new law of grace.*

This opinion, however dogmatically delivered, as clear and unquestionable, I must confess, does not satisfy me; for several reasons. 1. The scripture representation of the state of the sinner, at the time when he is justified, seems unavoidably to require the interposition of some act of God, applicative of the law, rule or promise (call it which you please, of this I dispute not how) to the sinner, now personally attacked, convened before the judge, accused and convicted. How such a one can be free, without the judge's interposal on his behalf, I know not. Nor seems it very easily in-

* Great Propitiation, edit. 2d. 107. 108, 109.

telligible. The sinner's own pleading of the constitution or law will not end the dispute betwixt him and his accusers, if the judge is silent; as it never does in the like cases among men. 2. Justification is expressly said to be the act of God, Rom. viii. 33. In like manner, we read of God's forgiving of sin now, or at a definite time, and not before; which cannot easily be reconciled to this opinion. And I doubt, if the scripture, designing to set forth such an act of God, could use terms more significant to this purpose than those it has made use of. 3. This opinion seems entirely to deny sentential justification. For as to that justification, which is commonly so called, at the last day, it is a thing altogether different from that which the scripture speaks of under the name of justification before God. The Judge, the state of the persons, the ground and design of the procedure, are altogether different.* 4. The reformed churches, in their confessions, seem harmoniously agreed in this, "that justification is an act of God, applicative of the Gospel, to the sinner's actual relief, upon his believing, and at the time of it."† This, it is like, would not have much weight with the author, were he alive, who makes no difficulty, not only to dissent from the reformed church, but also is bold to charge them with talking not very intelligibly, if consistently with themselves. But however, this will have its weight with sober spirits.‡

II. Others there are, who, besides that justification by constituting the gospel promise or law, whereby it is provided, that the believer shall be justified, are willing to admit of another act of God, at the time of believing, viz. An immanent act, that is, God acquits the believer in his own mind. So Mr Ferguson in his elegant discourse upon justification. §

But neither can I say that this fully satisfies. For, 1. The immanent acts of God are all eternal, nor are they distinct from God himself, as our divines generally agree: but this act of justification is at the time of believing, and not before, and has an effect without him; it terminates on the sinner, and makes a relative change. || 2. An immanent act answers not the end of justification, nor comes it up to the scripture account of it, which makes it terminate in conscience, and free the sinner from any just impeachment or accusation, upon the grounds, whereon formerly he was impleaded and pursued.

III Others there are, who seem to conceive, that this act of God's grace justifying a sinner, consists in, or rather is his powerful application or setting home the word of promise, immediately upon the sinner's first believing on, or accepting of the Lord Jesus.

For confirming this, several things may be alleged, not without some countenance from the word, as, 1. This act of God is unquestionably an act of Grace. 2. The word of promise is the channel or means, whereby all the grace of the covenant, of whatever sort, is conveyed to us. 3. It is not the bare letter of promise: but it is the promise, as used by the spirit of God, to whom the application of saving blessings belong, that doth effectuate this conveyance, whether the grace or privilege be in its own nature real, or a work of grace wrought in the soul of the sinner, or only relative, such as acquitment, and the change thereby made unquestionably is. The meaning plainly and shortly is this: the spirit of God, by the promise of in-

*See Dr Owen on Justification, p. 223 224, 225. † See Harmony of Confess.

‡ Great Propitiation, p. 168, &c. § Ferguson on Justification, p. 207. || See as to this Kendal against Goodwin, part 2. cap. 4. Digres. p. 138, &c.

herent grace, produces inherent and real effects: such as holy dispositions, holy affections, &c. The same spirit, by the promises of relative grace, and the application of them to the soul, effectuates a relative change, or produces effects, which merely to contradistinguish them from real and inherent, I may call moral or relative, such as acquitment from condemnation, right to the favour of God; and privileges of children. 4. It is agreed among those who are found, that at first believing, there is a clear discovery of Christ Jesus, as held forth in the word, by the spirit of the Lord, whereby the soul convinced of sin, is effectually determined to close with him, as the only way of relief. And this act of the soul is now generally thought to be the justifying act of faith. 5. It must also be granted, that at the same time, or immediately upon the back of this, there follows some discovery of the security and safety of the soul's eternal concerns, in adherence to this way. That there is some such apprehension, is evident from this one thing. The most discouraged soul, from the first moment of believing, at its worst condition, cannot think of giving up with its interest in this way, upon any terms. This can never be accounted for otherwise than, by supposing, that amidst all its shakings, there is some trust, expectation or hope of salvation in this way. 6. The ground of this hope, trust, or expectation, certainly is the promise of God, cleared or set home by the Spirit of God, at the soul's first closing with Christ. And this act of God, setting home the promise to the believer, as a ground of trust, and which always does in some sort relieve, as was noted above, I take to be the justifying act of God.

If I should stop here, what has been said would appear too dark and perplexed, and would fail with many of giving a due understanding of the opinion; much less would it be able to satisfy the mind as to the truth of it, or answer objections. I shall therefore endeavour to give a clear and distinct account of what my thoughts are, which fall in for the main with this opinion, which has been but obscurely proposed, as being gathered from dark hints in writing and conversation.

General observations laid down for clearing the way to the solution of this question.

IN order to a distinct conceiving of this matter, the ensuing observations would be carefully taken notice of.

I. Faith in the Lord Jesus has some special influence, be it of what kind it will, into our justification before God. The constant use of those expressions, that we are justified by, or through faith, while the like expressions are not used with respect to any other grace or duty in this matter, clearly evince what is asserted.*

II. The subject of this justifying faith is a sinner, cited to and sisted at the tribunal of God, convicted of guilt, destitute of any valid defence in himself, and who, in a word, has his mouth stopped before God. No other is capable immediately of this faith.

III. "The object of this faith is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as the ordinance of God, in his work of mediation for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, and as, unto that end, proposed in the promise of the gospel."†

* Dr Owen on Justification, pag. 148, &c.

† Ibid. pag. 114, &c.

He that would see this fully confirmed and explained may consult the judicious Dr Owen his *Treatise of Justification*, Chap. 1, 2, 3.

IV. The acts of faith, in reference to this object required of convinced sinners, and comprised under the general name of believing in him, are severals.

1st, There is an assent unto the truths concerning Christ, his nature, person, and offices, viz. That he is God manifested in the flesh, that he is the person, whom God of his mercy to sinners, made choice of, and sent into the world to recover them, that he is the only mediator between God and sinners, “who is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God through him,” &c. The object of this assent is the “revelation of these truths in the word of promise.”

2dly, There is the receiving act of faith, whereby we accept of, or receive Christ, John i. 12. as to which we are to observe distinctly three things :

First, This receiving of Christ not being capable of the natural or vulgar sense of the word, as applied to things external, which are received by the hand, &c., it is obvious, it must be taken in a moral sense. And being thus taken, it points at two things, or two acts. 1. It supposes an act of the mind or judgment approving of Christ, as meet for the purpose, for which he is proposed. 2. It formally and directly imports the will’s consenting to, closing with, or being pleased with him as such. The mind seeing in him all that is to be desired, with respect to the case the sinner is now in the will is pleased, closes with him, and is satisfied, that he is such a one as the sinner wants.

Secondly, If we consider this approbation more fully, as applied in practice, it takes in several things, as, 1. A renunciation of all other means pretending any usefulness to the same end, and standing in opposition to, or competition with Christ, as thus proposed. 2. The soul’s judging that Christ, and he alone, is only, and in all respects, fitted and designed for that work, joined with a satisfaction of mind and well-pleasèdness with him as such. 3. An acquiescence or rest of mind in this consent ; so that the soul is come to a point, that it has no other way to look, and that if it has but him, it is safe.*

Thirdly, It is to be observed, that the object of this act of approbation is properly the goodness, suitableness and excellency of Christ, as the means of recovery of lost sinners. Now this much for the second act of faith.

3dly, There is in faith, or there follows upon the foregoing acts another, viz. That which is commonly called the fiducial act, or trust, that is, the soul, in expectation and confidence of relief by Christ, throws itself upon him. And this may be conceived two ways ; either, 1. More generally, that the soul seeing, as above, the vanity of other ways, and the safety of this, dare build no expectation any where else, but looks to this as the only door at which relief can come in. Or, 2. More particularly, for a confident trust of its salvation in particular this way, that is, through Jesus Christ. If the former only be intended, it differs not from that acquiescence above-mentioned ; if the latter, to wit, a confidence or trust, that we shall be relieved ; whether it is more faint or more vigorous, it is indeed,

* This is that cleaving to the Lord, which some call trust or adherence, and it respects the way, or is a fiducial confidence as to the safety of the way whereon trust, expectation, or fiducial confidence, as to the event, follows ; and this is what we judge posterior to justification.

where the other two acts precede, a distinct act of faith. As to this last act, I shall only observe one thing, which is, that the ground of it is the promise or the engagement of the faithfulness of God, for the salvation of believers, and that as specially applied by God, to this sinner, and the application discerned by him. This is of great moment to the clearing the point in hand, and shall be afterwards further insisted on.

V. It is disputed, which of these three acts above-mentioned is the justifying act of faith; that is, the act whereon justification immediately and necessarily ensues, and with respect to which we are in scripture said to be justified by faith.* The papists generally, and some of our divines, as Camero, particularly, place it only in assent. Of this I shall only say, it runs counter to the scripture accounts of this matter, if it is not so explained, as to make it really fall in with one or other of the opinions after mentioned. But as to this, our divines against the papists may be consulted. Others place it in the fiducial act. And of these some in the fiducial act more generally understood, as has been above noted: and so, in effect, differ but in words from them, who make the second act that which justifies. Others, among whom were many of our first reformers, seem, at least, to make the fiducial act, strictly so called, to be the justifying act of faith, viz. A confidence, persuasion, or belief that our sins are forgiven.† But as to this, I shall only say, it is obvious this can be no man's duty to believe so, but upon supposition, that he is antecedently justified by faith. Wherefore, others do place it in the second act, which Dr Owen describes thus: "It is the heart's approbation of the way of justification and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, proposed in the gospel, as proceeding from the grace, wisdom and love of God, with its acquiescency therein, as to its own condition." This acquiescency mentioned by the doctor, is not an acquiescency as to its own interest, or a persuasion of its salvation in particular, but it is to be understood as above explained. The confirmation and explanation of this may be found in the place above referred to, and in the writings of our divines, practical and polemical, who generally embrace this opinion, and with them I agree.‡

VI. As soon then as the soul, by a discovery of Christ Jesus, in the light of the Lord, conveyed to the soul in and by the gospel, is brought to this approbation of him, justification, or the act of God acquitting him, doth immediately ensue. And as to this act, the question is, wherein it consists? or, by what means is it expressed? How does God pronounce this sentence? And for clearing this question upon the foregoing principles, we observe further:

VII. That the fiducial act, or the trust above-mentioned, in one degree or other, necessarily accompanies, at the same instant of time, and follows immediately upon the foregoing acts of faith; though, as was above-observed, it is not the justifying act, but consequent in order of nature thereto. I do not mean that the believing soul has, always at first closing with Christ, such a steady and full persuasion, that its sins are forgiven, that eventually it shall be saved, as that it dare boldly pronounce and speak out so much to others, or even resolutely assert it within itself: nor do I mean, that it has such a clear view of its own graces, that it can reflect, and conclude confidently from the sight of them, its election, justification, and certain salvation; to which two sorts of persuasion, the one built upon a re-

* Baxter on Universal Redemption, p. 111. † See Dr Owen ubi supra, p. 158. Shepherd, Sound Believer, p. 196, 197, &c. ‡ Maastricht, p. 53, 55.

reflection on our own graces, under the influences of the spirit of grace, enabling us to discern them, and conclude from them our interest in Christ; the other bottomed upon a word of promise, such as that, "be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," powerfully set home by the spirit of God; most part do restrict, how justly, I inquire not now, the notion of assurance. But that which I mean, is, that the first saving manifestation of Christ to a convinced sinner, pursued by the law, conscience and Satan, not only determines the soul to close with him, in the manner above-mentioned, but thereon also immediately follows such an expectation, trust and humble confidence, as engages the soul ever after to follow the Lord in a way of duty, without despairing as to the saving issue; yea, not without secret hope, though this afterwards, in times of temptation, is variously clouded, that in due time, it shall obtain a merciful issue.* This persuasion and humble confidence is really particular as to the sinner himself and his own salvation, though through the humbling impressions he has of himself at the time, his own guilt, and the awe he has of God upon his spirit, he fears to express it directly and particularly of himself.

For confirming of this, I shall only hint the few following things. 1. That which is set before the soul's eye at first believing, viz. A discovery, in a supernatural light, of the glory of the grace, mercy, and love of God to sinners in Christ Jesus, especially considering what the poor sinner's circumstances at present are, cannot possibly be supposed to have a less effect. 2. Whenever this discovery, without which believing is impossible, is given or made to the soul, it is impossible but the soul must be some way relieved; for this is the very design of the discovery. Now this persuasion, as we have stated it, is the least that can be supposed in this matter. Without something of this, the soul is, in effect, as it was before. 3. The experience and confession of those who have distinctly observed what has passed in their soul at this time, and instances of the word confirm this. 4. When poor disquieted believers, through the power of temptation and confusion upon their minds, deny any such persuasion or confidence, yet by its effects, it is evident to others, that at any time they have it. Doth not their resolute adherence to duty, in spite of all discouragements, and their refusing to quit their claim, or try other ways suggested, plainly bewray some such secret persuasion? 5. To add no more, our gravest and most experienced divines, their placing the essence of faith in assurance, seems to say, that they were generally persuaded, at least, that this was inseparable from justification. And if they meant no more, their opinion will, upon the strictest trial, be found unexceptionable.

VIII. This humble persuasion, trust, confidence or expectation, must be allowed in believers, to be an act of faith, and not a groundless presumption; and if so, it must have some solid foundation.

IX. The ground of this fiducial act is certainly the word of promise, whereby God engages to pardon, and accept graciously sinners in Christ Jesus. This the scriptures many ways clear. In the gospel call there is a revelation of Christ to be assented to; an offer or proposal of him, as worthy of all acceptance, to be accepted; a command requiring and warranting this acceptance; and finally, a promise of mercy, or salvation to the acceptor. This last is the ground of this fiducial trust. Psal. cxix. 74., cxxx. 15.

* See Dr Owen on Psal. cxxx. p. 280—287.

X. Yet the word of promise, absolutely considered, is not of itself without the special application of it to the soul, able or sufficient to draw forth this trust. The promise must come, not only in word, but in power and in the Holy Ghost. 1 Thes. i. 5. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," must shine into the soul, and give that evidence of the faithfulness of his own engagement, which only can prevail with the soul to lay stress upon it.

XI. Hence it appears evident, that there is an act of God, manifesting his faithfulness in the promise, and clearly with power holding forth, and applying his mercy promised for the relief of the sinner, now looking to, and approving of the Lord Jesus, as the only way of acceptance.

To prevent any mistake about this, when I say, that God applies, I do not mean, that God speaks in the way of an absolute promise or assertion, "thy sins are forgiven thee," whatever he may do upon some occasions; but I intend, that at the very same moment, when the poor trembling convinced sinner is, by a clear manifestation of the mediator, prevailed to give up with all other ways of relief, and, turn his eye toward him, as alone worthy of acceptance, and who only can be available to poor sinners in this case; there is, I say, at that very instant, though in order of nature consequent, 1. A shining discovery of mercy, of which the sinner had no sight before in that way. 2. This mercy is particularly held forth to the poor sinner for his relief; it is set in his eye as suitable to his present case. 3. The promise and engagement of God is enforced upon the soul, thou shalt be saved, that is, saving mercy is presently tendered to the poor trembling sinner.

Now, though the sinner, not yet recovered out of the fright, which the discovery of his misery immediately before cast him into, dare not always presently go into particular and applicative conclusions; yet, this gracious intimation begets somewhat of a humble confidence, and breaks, for the time, at least, the force of the oppressing and confounding charge, he till then lay under.

XII. Now this act of God, above described, may, I conceive, be called, and justly thought to be, his justifying act, or act of acquitment.

To clear this a little, observe the ensuing particulars,

1. The close connection of these things, as to time, all being at the same instant, occasions unavoidably some difficulty, in the conception, observation, and expression of the several distinct acts, either of God, or of our own minds: and this difficulty is heightened by the fright the sinner is in before the gospel manifestation, and the surprisingness of the manifestation itself. Yet,

2. It is clear, and agreed amongst sound divines; as for others, we concern not ourselves now with them, that there are such distinct actings of faith at first, that each of them has its proper foundation; and finally, that the saving manifestation of God's mercy in the promise, through Jesus Christ, is that which gives ground for these several actings.

3. It is upon the grounds given, evident, that there is such an act of God, holding forth mercy and favour, in and by the promise to the soul, while it is fixing its eye upon the Lord Jesus in the way above mentioned. I need not stand to confirm this further. There is not, nor can be any ground sufficient to produce or support the trust above mentioned, if this is denied.

4. That this is an act of acquitment, appears thus. 1. The sinner now

is at the tribunal of God, ready to sink under the weight of a heavy charge, and beat from all his pleas. 2. The gospel discovery seasonably, at that very instant, proposing the Lord Jesus to view, the soul's eye is turned wholly there. 3. While he looks here only for relief, God irradiates the soul with a sweet manifestation of his mercy, through Jesus Christ, to sinners, in the promise. 4. This discovery made at this instant to the sinner, whose cause is now depending, and who is, as it were, impanneled, imports no less than an intimation of the judge's mind as to the case depending, an acquitment from the charge, in opposition unto condemnation, or a discovery, and application of wrath and the curse of the sinner's conscience, which, in their circumstances, would quite overwhelm. 5. This act is sufficient to all the ends and purposes of an act of justification: for, first, it repels the force of the charge; and in experience it is found, that this discovery always, at the season of it, though it cures not all the accidental consequences of the sinner's former case presently; yet it frees the soul from that confounding dread and despondency he was formerly under. Secondly, it endears and lays an everlasting obligation of kindness unto God, the sense whereof never goes entirely off the sinner's mind, though some occurrences, at some times, may weaken it. Thirdly, the sinner from this time forward, has, if not at all times to his own discerning, yet really, and oftentimes to the discerning of others, a liberty of spirit from that dispiriting dread of God he was under before, and somewhat, if I may not say of confidence, yet of kindly freedom in his dealings with God. Fourthly, this act of God not only gives right to freedom from all righteous pursuit of that charge, that was but now managed in the sinner's conscience against him; which, I confess *ipso jure*, results, at the instant of believing, from the promise: but moreover, it declaratively, and in a juridical way, applies this right, and gives the sinner a ground whereupon he justly may, and should claim, insist upon, and make use of, against all attempts of any who shall endeavour to revive the old process. Fifthly, after this, none by warrant or authority from God, and in his name, may or can righteously insist against the sinner for his life. Sixthly, when Satan the malicious accuser, through the permission of God, for wise ends, litigiously weakens the pursuit, and importunately vexes the sinner, there needs no new or different sentence to silence and repel him: if God vouchsafe of his mercy, to revive the first discovery, which is like an extract of the first sentence, the soul is instantly quieted, and the enemy confounded. Finally, immediately upon the back of this, God carries it toward the soul as a reconciled God, and this, at first for most part, discernibly; or if it is not discerned, this flows rather from the sinner's weakness, than from want of evidence. In a word, upon this discovery the judge appears divested, as it were, of his terrible majesty; the frowns are no more seen in his face, but a pleasantness joined still with such majesty, as commands at once kindly thoughts and respect: the panel is no more imprisoned and hampered with the fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, as before, the pursuers either entirely withdraw and disappear, or, if the litigious adversary persist, what Satan or a misinformed conscience does now, is only like the malicious reclaimings, occasioned by the disappointment they have met with from the judge: and to add no more, the poor man, immediately upon the back of this, with some pleasant freedom, goes his way and falls to his work.

Whether might not God justly have required that act of faith of every one of the sons of men. whereon now by a gracious promise he has volun-

tarily obliged himself to justify sinners, although he had made no such promise?

If he had by a simple doctrinal revelation universally revealed Christ Jesus, and the way of salvation by him, without promising to justify one or other, or fixing any terms, but reserved these wholly to his own mind, had not every sinner been obliged to assent to the revelation, and in judgment approve this as the only expedient suitable to their case, and renouncing all other ways to turn their eyes to this, reckoning thus with themselves, "all our contrivances are vain here—here is the only suitable expedient? Whether God will ever vouchsafe to save me, I cannot tell; he has kept that to himself; but if ever I am saved, this is the way, and therefore I will look here, and let him do with me what pleases him. Justly may he set me aside; yet if I go elsewhere, it is in vain assuredly. Here is a safe way, and who can tell but he may be gracious." This I think has the acting of that faith, that is justifying, or it is that acting of faith that it is so.



SERMONS

DELIVERED

ON SACRAMENTAL OCCASIONS.

PREFACE.

THE following sermons need no recommendation. The known worth of the author, the subjects treated of, the spiritual dexterity discovered in handling them, will, I hope, sufficiently recommend them unto all such as shall, with a humble and serious mind, peruse them.

The author's portraiture is so fairly drawn, partly by himself, in these of his writings already published, partly by his friends, who have given the world an account of his character; that it wants not my pencil to illuminate any part of it. Yet I do, with a particular pleasure, own, that being of his acquaintance about the space of fourteen years, and having frequently had occasion of converse with him, I wanted not opportunity to observe that in him, which exceedingly endeared him unto me, and made me reckon it a great happiness to have had such intimacy with him. Besides his solid learning, his clear and penetrating judgment, his acute reasoning, his eminent piety, and other excellent endowments, there was one thing I could not but highly value in his converse, that, according to the apostle's advice, Eph. iv. 29. "What proceeded out of his mouth was good, to the use of edifying, which might minister grace to the hearers." So that I may truly say, I was seldom in his company, but it was mine own fault if I was not edified.

And here also I crave leave to remark, that notwithstanding the pregnancy of his parts, and his knowledge in the mystery of redemption through Christ, above many: yet no man was less fond of novelty in divinity, nor more careful to "hold fast the form of sound words." He was indeed an enemy to legal preaching, and was under no small fears of the prevailing of a legal spirit, both in ministers and people. But at the same time, he was very far from running to the other extreme. He knew well, that it had been the special mercy of this church, to keep the golden mean betwixt the Pelagian scheme on the one hand, and the Antinomian on the other; that as the glorious grace of God in Christ, is in a great measure denied by the former, in all its several shapes; so the latter, under a pretence (nay, perhaps, in some, from a real design) of exalting the riches and freedom of grace, does exceedingly disparage it. And in this he trode the steps of these burning and shining lights of this church, who, in the last age, made it their great business, both in preaching and writing, to caution people against both these extremes.

The subjects insisted on in this book, as they are of the greatest importance to the souls of men, so they are exceedingly sweet and precious, and very suitable to the special occasions, upon which these discourses were prepared and delivered. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is our great gospel feast, at which the people of God are entertained with "fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined." In this blessed ordinance, "Christ, the wisdom and power of God, is evidently set forth, crucified before our eyes." Here it is that the Lord is graciously pleased sometimes to give special manifestations of himself to the souls of his people, which they are called to improve for their confirmation and establishment. In attending upon this solemnity in a due manner, the Lord vouchsafes to his own the sweet influences of his Spirit and grace, whereby their souls are refreshed and revived after sad decays; and serious souls ordinarily have never more ardent desires after, and fervent longings for the "breaking of that glorious day, when all shadows shall for ever flee away," than when they come from this precious ordinance, which is one of the nearest resemblances of heaven that we enjoy here upon earth.

As to the author's managing of these subjects, the Discourses will speak for themselves. I shall only say that, modestly speaking, something, well worth the reader's perusal, may be expected upon such arguments from one who had "really tasted that the Lord is gracious; who felt the power of these truths on his own spirit, which he delivered unto others; who knew well how to "comfort others with that comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God;" and who, in a word, was a workman that "needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth:" and I persuade myself, that such as read them in a suitable manner shall not find their expectation frustrated.

Had the now glorified author designed them for the press, or reviewed them with an eye to the publishing of them, they would no doubt have come forth in a better dress, being only written in order to his preaching them to a popular audience, and not so full perhaps as delivered, partly through want of time, partly through bodily indisposition; but even under these, and other disadvantages of an alike nature, such as have revised them are not afraid to venture them abroad as they are, being confident that not only the matter, but even the method and style, will be found acceptable, and in a special manner adapted to the relish of persons "exercised unto godliness."

I conclude, with wishing that the Lord himself, who only can give the increase, may be graciously pleased to accompany these sermons with his effectual blessing, and make them eminently successful in promoting the great ends of his own glory, and the good of souls.

SERMON I.

THE LORD'S FEAST:

OR, THE

ENTERTAINMENTS OF GOD'S HOUSE OPENED.

ISAIAH XXV. 6.

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

To introduce you to these words, we must look back to the close of the preceding chapter, where we have a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ, his victory and conquest over his enemies, and his glorious reign in mount Zion and Jerusalem, (that is, the New Testament church, in Old Testament language) before, or in presence of his ancients, his ministers and servants, who are in his court; what courtiers are in the courts of princes, attendants and servants, who are employed in subordinate administrations, receive and execute his commands, stand in his presence, and are witnesses of his glory.

Now, the prophet being deeply affected with the manifestation of the Lord's glory, in punishing or chastising his own people, overthrowing his enemies; establishing his throne, and reigning gloriously; he cannot forbear to celebrate this in a song, contained in the first five verses of this chapter. After this song is over; in the words of our text, and in the subsequent seven verses, he returns to a prophetic description of the happiness of the subjects of Christ's kingdom in the gospel day, under his government.

Of this their happiness, the Spirit of God here, by the prophet, condescends on three notable instances. 1. There is a great entertainment designed for them, in this sixth verse, which is our text. 2. There are clear and full discoveries of the counsel of God for their salvation, designed for them, with a removal of all those veils, by which their light into those things was formerly obstructed, viz. The veil, or covering of natural darkness on their minds: and, the veil of dark shadows giving but an obscure discovery, both are to be removed, ver. 7. and accordingly now are so, as the New Testament plainly declares. 3. A more complete victory over their enemies, their spiritual enemies, is promised, ver. 8, 10, 11, 12. "Death is to be swallowed up in victory;" and Moab, under which name all their enemies are couched: Moab, I say, is to be trodden down.

In the midst of this last branch of this prophecy, there is interjected, ver. 9. a prophecy of the joy that the evidence of God's mercy, love, and faithfulness, in accomplishing all those things, should afford, after long de-

lays, and many obstructions, to the disappointment and confusion of enemies, who were upbraiding them with their expectations, and their full establishment, over the belly of all their fears, in the experience and enjoyment of what their own unbelief, and the suggestions of enemies would have had them, to the discredit of the promise of God, to despair of. Now, says the prophet, in that day the church will triumph time about, and on better grounds. The enemies' insults were a triumph before the victory; but the church will then speak with them in the gate, and answer all their suggestions by plain convincing proof. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this God is our God," &c. But to return to the text:

This sixth verse which we have read, was, to the church of old, a prophecy, or promise, under figurative expressions, of that rich provision of spiritual mercies which the Lord designed to prepare for, and entertain his people with, in gospel times, in and by gospel ordinances. What was to them a prophecy and promise of good things at a distance, is to us, partly, a history of what the gospel-church has long enjoyed in gospel-institutions, and what is now still in them provided for us, if we are the children of Zion; and partly they are a promise to all the Lord's people, now more especially, when they attend and wait on the Lord, in the institutions of worship, as you this day do; and that of good things ready prepared for you, if you are such, and presently to be offered to, and bestowed on you.

Here then, you see what entertainment you are invited to, when you are called together to wait on the Lord this day, in the gospel ordinances of worship; and more especially this ordinance of the Lord's supper claims relation to this promise, as coming nearest to the similitude made use of in the text, not to mention other reasons which might be offered. You cannot avoid owning, that here is an account of a great entertainment, and that it is very proper to hear of this now, when there is an assembly gathered together to celebrate a feast; but perhaps you may have some doubt about your concern in that entertainment mentioned in the text. Well, if it is so, we allow it reasonable that you should be satisfied on this head: but this day we have much work on our hand, and time being very precious, we must therefore wave the usual method, and choose that which suits the text, may best remove your difficulties, and withal bring all home to your consciences, and the design of this meeting. Well then, to come presently to the matter, the text suggests an answer to some questions, that you may want to be satisfied about.

Here is mention of an entertainment, may you say; but we desire to know,

- I. Where is it to be expected?
- II. Is it certainly to be had there?
- III. Who is the provider of it?
- IV. How is it prepared?
- V. For whom is it designed?
- VI. What sort of an entertainment is it?
- VII. What are the materials that are provided?

Now, if we can inform you about these things, I think you may, by that time, have little else to desire, but to step forward, if you are among the called, and eat cheerfully, and be thankful. Well, the text suggests answers to each of those.

- I. Would ye know where this entertainment is to be expected? The

text answers, "It is on this mountain." If still you say, On what mountain? I answer, the context answers, "It is mount Zion;" that is mentioned in the last verse of the preceding chapter, to which this relates. But this answer must be more particularly explained; because it is the key of the whole text, that will open the way to all the rest, if it is well explained. Now, to clear this to you, observe seriously the few following remarks:

1. In general observe, that the most remarkable events, which of old befel the church, as to its outward condition, were shadows of the spiritual mercies designed for the true Israel of God. Thus their bondage in Egypt, deliverance thence, travels through the wilderness, introduction into Canaan, were designed to lead unto a view of what spiritual mercies the Lord designed for his people. The application of these things in the New Testament clears this abundantly: wherefore,

2. When the Lord, of old, did promise spiritual mercies, which he designed, in the gospel times especially, to bestow, he promises them in words suited unto those things they then were conversant with; and by which the Lord shadowed, and darkly pointed out to them those spiritual things, under that darker dispensation; yet so as not to leave them without hints, sufficiently intimating, that they were not to rest in those carnal things, that were but shadows of spiritual good things to come, though the generality of the Israelites looked no further than the bare letter and outward shadow. But,

3. To come more close, you must observe, that when the Lord brought his people out of Egypt, in their way to the promised land, he brought them to mount Sinai, that stands in the midst of a barren wilderness, a mount covered with bushes and brambles, whence it had its name. Here God appeared to them, clothed in such manner, as might contribute to fix an awe and dread of his terrible majesty on their hearts, *Exod. xix.* "He descends in fire, in blackness, and darkness, with terrible lightnings, and thunders, and the sound of a trumpet," *Heb. xii. 18, 19.* "And from his mouth and his right hand proceeded a fiery law," *Duet. xxxiii.* Meanwhile all the people stood trembling, and quaking at the foot of the mountain, obliged to keep their distance on pain of present death without mercy, hearing the voice of words that filled them with terror, and made even Moses "exceedingly fear and quake." This terrible manner of giving the law, and establishing the old covenant, together with the multitude of its precepts, severity of its sanction, and punctual execution of them, filled them with dread, and brought them under a spirit of bondage. Now, this mount Sinai represents the Old Testament church, and its state.

4. After some stay here, the Lord led his people forward to Canaan, "a land flowing with milk and honey, and brought them to the border of his sanctuary," *Psal. lxxviii. 54.* and settled them at Jerusalem, "in quiet habitations," *Isa. xxxiii. 20.* And here, for the place of his worship he chose mount Zion; on it he ordered the celebration of all that worship that did serve to typify, and hold out Christ as the relief of sinners from the curse and terrors of the fiery law. Here the temple, by God's appointment, was built; here was the ark, the mercy seat, the sacrifices, all pointing out Christ the Lamb of God that takes away sin. In a word, hither the tribes went up to the testimony of Israel, to pay thanks to God. Here were the priests, the prophets, the thrones of judgment; shadows of Christ in his several offices, for the salvation of sinners from wrath. Wherefore,

5. This mount Zion, which the Lord desired for his habitation, saying,

“This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell,” &c. Psal. cxxxii. 14. was a shadow of the gospel church, in which the substance of those things, whereof they had only faint resemblances in their ordinances of worship, is to be found. This is plainly taught in the New Testament, particularly in the 4th of the Galatians, and Heb. xii. 18, 19. We are said, under the New Testament, to be come, not to mount Sinai, which he there repeats the description of; but to mount Zion, “to the heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem, that blood of sprinkling, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,” &c. Well then, in the Gospel church, and its spiritual institutions of worship, the true mount Zion, we have the substance of what they had only the shadow of. This leads me,

6. To observe, That the place of gospel ordinances is this mount Zion spoken of in the text, to wit, the gospel church; more especially the solemn ordinances of public worship are hereby intended, Zion being the place only allotted, by divine appointment, for their celebration. This is the city of our solemnities, as Zion properly was to them of old. And upon this account it is, that “God loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob,” Psal. lxxxvii. 2.

7. You are to observe, That nothing else can be meant here than this. For, 1. This only is that mount Zion in which Christ reigns before his ancients gloriously, as you heard from the last verse of the preceding chapter, to which this relates. 2. This is plainly a prophecy of what the church had not enjoyed, and of more eminent enjoyments than they had before; but they never had more, or so much, as in David and Solomon’s time, unless it be under the gospel. 3. This is a feast for all people, not only Jews, but Gentiles. Now this says, the inclosure was to be broken down, and all that frame of worship suited to uphold it, and consequently, all privilege of that Zion where it was celebrated. 4. This mount Zion must be where it can be reached by all people; which can belong to no other particular place, nor agree to any thing else, save gospel ordinances. 5. The explication given above from the word, is enough, were there no more to clear it, that it is in mount Zion, even the mount of gospel ordinances; and more especially, this solemn ordinance of the supper; which God always had, and has still a special respect to; here, I say, it is that this entertainment, spoken of in the text, is prepared; here it is to hold.

8. As I hinted before, though I exclude no gospel institution, yet I conceive this day’s solemnity, the feast of our Lord’s Supper, may plead and be allowed a special interest in the promise, upon several accounts. As, 1. In this there is an invitation to a participation of these same spiritual mercies held forth in the text. 2. They are exhibited under the same notion and view as a feast. And, 3. The design of their exhibition, under this similitude in the text, and those signs in this sacrament, is one and the same to hold forth the Lord, as the fountain of spiritual strength, nourishment, and consolation. Fat things, and wine, are suited to all these ends, and so is it in this ordinance. 4. Here, if any where else, the Lord allows his people plenty, that may well be called a feast; others might be named, but this is enough. Well, now you have got an answer to your question, Where is this feast to be?

This mount Zion is the mount of Gospel ordinance, especially public solemnities, and more particularly it is in this ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. Well, you are not to come to Sinai, to the fiery law, to darkness,

thunders, and lightnings, and to the voice of words, which they who heard them once, desired to hear them no more : but this day you are come unto mount Zion, even that mount which God has chosen, of which he has said, " This is my rest for ever, for I have desired it : " Of this mount " glorious things are spoken," Psal. lxxxvii. 3. " It is the city of our solemnity," Isa. xxxiii. 20. Out of which " the law goes," Isa. ii. 3. Here are the " good tidings of peace proclaimed," Isa. xl. 9. This is the place where the elect are " begotten to a lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3. of which it may be said, that " this man and that man was born there, and the highest shall establish her," Psal. lxxxvii. 5. 6. Here it is that the " Redeemer comes to them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob," Isa. lix. 20. " In Zion the Lord is great," Psal. xcix. 2. and out of it " the Lord shineth gloriously," Psal. l. 2. Here " he places salvation for Israel his glory," Isa. xlv. at the close, and " sends his people strength," Psal. xx. 2. " Salvation," Psal. xiv. 7. and " blessings," Psal. cxviii. 5. Even all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus."

In gospel ordinances, especially the word and sacraments, all these are communicated. On this mount Zion stands the Lamb, Rev. xiv. 1. who has prepared here an entertainment this day. Have ye not reason to say, " How awful is this place ? This is none other but the house of God, the gate of heaven ! " Blessed be the Lord, that has brought me hither. But,

II, If any of you move the question, Will this feast hold ? The text answers, That on this mount *shall* this feast be made ; fear not then, here shall be an entertainment. And to satisfy you in this, only consider the import of this little word *shall* in the text, which says to you,

1. This is not a mere surmise, a may be ; but what is purposed and determined, and was long ago fixed in the intention of him, " who purposes and none can disannul it," Jer. iv. 28. " The counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart, to all generations."

2. Nor is it merely a purpose kept secret in his own breast ; but it is a purpose intimate, which he has allowed, nay, authorised his servants in his name to publish. Now, he is not wont to alter the word once gone out of his mouth, Psal. lxxxix. 34.

3. Not only so, but it is a promise, and this, in a sort, put it out of his power, without unfaithfulness, to change or recede from it. His people may claim the accomplishment of his word of promise.

4. It is a promise confirmed by many other promises, of an alike nature, elsewhere recorded in the word ; where he records his name he has promised to meet with his people and bless them ; where there are two or three met in his name, he is in the midst of them. Where his servants administer his ordinances he has promised to be with them to the end of the world. He has called us to this occasion, and invites to take, eat, drink, open our mouths wide, and he will fill them. And finally, I may add, The church has had it confirmed now by a long tract of experience. But,

III. If you say, Who provides this entertainment, and is here to cover this table for us ? The text answers, It is the Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth. From whom else could it be expected ?

1. To whom does it belong to provide for a family to make entertainments in a house ? Is it not to the master of the family, him to whom the house belongs ? He is to provide for those of his own house, see 2 Tim. v. 8. Now, what the Lord will not allow of, nay blames, as hugely faulty, in a poor worm, he will not be guilty of himself.

2. To whom does it belong to make great entertainments, royal feasts ? Is it not to kings ?

3. Who is able to feast all people, save he who is the God of the whole earth, who challenges all the cattle on a thousand hills as his, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, nay, what heaven or earth can afford; nay more, who is God all-sufficient, who, if all the creation cannot afford what is enough to answer his purpose, and accomplish his promise, he can create vastly more.

4. To whom does it belong to accomplish the promises, but to Jehovah, the God that gives a being to his word and all things else. But, methinks, I hear some poor soul surmising, "It is indeed every way worthy of him to make such entertainments, and it is huge condescendance that we hear any thing of it: but what means his sword on his thigh? why is he red in his apparel? why takes he to himself on a feast day this name Jehovah Sabbaoth, Lord of hosts? This were proper in a day of battle; but on a feast day it begets mistrust. Who can eat cheerfully with a sword over his head? Soft raiment, a sceptre of peace, garments of salvation, and some name denoting bounty, love, mercy, riches, would seem more suitable on this occasion." I answer, All this is mistake flowing from ignorance of the reasons of his assuming this name on this occasion, which are sufficient to remove all those fears. I offer a few: know then,

1. This feast is a feast of triumph over his and your enemies; it is designed to be a commemoration of the victory he has obtained, and a pledge of your making in due time, through him, a full conquest. Here he appears, if I may so speak, in his warrior's dress, as the Lord of hosts, to mind you, that on this mount he has trodden down Moab, and swallowed up death in victory, and designs not to lay aside his weapons till the work is finished, and not one enemy left to occasion fear, or hinder your cheerful use of what he provides for you. Be of good cheer then, he has overcome the world, overcome your enemies.

2. You are to be entertained this day, as one part of this royal feast, with the spoil of enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, Ezek. xxxix. 18, 19; you are called, as it were, to eat the flesh of kings, princes, and great ones. This we may allude to: you are called together to satisfy yourself with a view of your enemies, destruction, the stroke that has fallen on them, and is yet to fall on them; he appears as the Lord of hosts, to let you know to whom you stand indebted for what is done, who brought home those spoils you now share in, and by whom you are to expect the completing of the victory.

3. You must know that this is, as David speaks, Psal. xxiii. "A table covered in presence of your foes." You have many on-lookers, sin, Satan, and the world, who regret your prosperity; and if it were in their power, would mar the joy of this day, and mingle your wine with your blood. Well, therefore does he appear as the Lord of hosts, to maintain the solemnity of your feast, and to secure you against the fears of your enemies; I mean, despondent fears: and to assure you that upon all the "glory there is a defence;" and that upon all the assemblies in mount Zion, "he will create a cloud," Isa. iv. 5.

4. All of you who are invited to this feast, are listed soldiers engaged in a warfare, and he appears as the Lord of hosts, to let you know, that you are to fight under his banner, and he is to muster the host of the battle, and means not to let you go alone; and to engage, and encourage, and strengthen you, he has invited you to his table. Well then, you see, my friends, the eating at his table is in effect a military oath, and imports an engagement to fight under him, and follow where he leads the way.

5. He appears this day as Jehovah Sabbaoth, the Lord of hosts, to give you an assurance, that the promises of the covenant shall be accomplished, notwithstanding all the obstructions that do or may seem to lie in the way. He is Jehovah the faithful God, that gives a being to his promises. He is the Lord of hosts, to let you know that enemies shall not be able to stand in the way or hinder him; "for he is strong that executes his word," Joel ii. 11. even the Lord of hosts, who will not fail, nor be discouraged, "till he has brought forth judgment unto victory.

6. He assumes this name, the Lord of hosts, to let you know, that you must not, this day, like those mentioned, Jude ver. 12. "Feed yourselves without fear:" the war is not over; but after this encouraging repast, you must immediately prepare for the battle.

Now, you have heard who has prepared this entertainment for you; it is the Lord of hosts, even our Lord Jesus Christ, the captain of salvation, who has trode the wine press alone, and is glorious in his apparel, dyed in the blood of enemies, Isa. lxiii. 1. and who "has on his vesture and thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of Lords, who will reign till he has put all enemies under his feet."

IV. Why is the making of this feast ascribed to him? Upon what accounts is he said to make this feast? I answer, upon good, nay, the best reason imaginable: for,

1. The first project of it, bred, if I may say so speak, in his breast. "Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us," we durst not have thought, far less durst we, if it had not sprung of himself, proposed such entertainments. The prodigal durst not have mentioned the fatted calf, Luke xv.

2. As he formed the design; it is all on his own expense we had got that portion of goods that was ours by creation-right, and spent them with riotous living: but lo here, out of his own sovereign grace, mercy, and bounty, he has provided a feast for our entertainment

3. His wisdom has the ordering the disposal of the whole fare he has prepared, and he orders every thing about it; what is every one's portion who shall sit, and who shall serve: see Prov. ix. 2, 3, &c.

4. He has prepared the house, the palace wherein it is provided. It is he that has reared up the glorious gospel church and institutions. "Wisdom has built her house, and hewn her seven pillars," Prov. ix. 2.

5. He has taken upon himself the principal charge of the inspection of the guests at this feast, as you see, Mat. xxii. 11. He it is that spies out the man that wants the wedding garment.

6. He it is that entertains the guests, welcomes them, and invites them to eat of what he has prepared. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Finally, He abundantly blesses their provision, and satisfies them to the full. Upon all these, and other such accounts, it appears how justly he may be said to make this feast. But we must go on to another question.

V. Will you say, But for whom is this entertainment prepared? I answer, The text tells "It is for all nations, for all people."

1. It is not for a few special favourites, a few minions, to the secluding others: but it is for all people, the whole church of Christ, of whatever size.

2. It is not narrowly confined to Israel, according to the flesh, the seed of Jacob, one particular nation, nay, but even for us Gentiles, who dwell

in the utmost ends of the earth, even in the islands of the sea. Blessed be God for this; of old it was not so: but now it is for all people, for every nation.

3. This table is not covered for the rich, for them that can repay him; but for the poor, the needy, and they especially are invited. He will not be worse himself than what he requires his to be, and to do, Luke xiv. 14.

4. In a word, it is for all people, every one that needs, that will come, that will be at peace with him, that will submit and list himself, whatever they have been, even the worst prodigals, if strong necessity has but brought them to see their need, bethink themselves, and return; they are not secluded, but heartily welcome to eat of this noble provision. Well, then, hear! O hear! poor, needy, hungry, thirsty, starving souls in Scotland, in Ceres, you are called to a covered table; none are secluded but cursed Moabites, unreconciled enemies, who are to be trodden down.

VI. If any of you say, But what sort of an entertainment is this? The text answers, "It is a feast." This is its nature more specially considered. Well, my friends,

1. What the Lord of hosts has prepared for you in the gospel, and this day, in this ordinance, is not an ordinary meal, such as his people have always had, nor is it a narrow allowance, but it is a plentiful entertainment, a feast.

2. It is a great entertainment; feasts are wont to be such; and indeed, if we compare it with what the church of old had, it may well be called a feast. They wanted not what was absolutely necessary; but "God has provided some better things for us." Though we are the younger brother, yet, Benjamin-like, we have got the double portion.

3. This is a feast, not only that may simply preserve life, but what may afford a pleasant and comfortable life. We may say, with the Psalmist, "Our cup runneth over," Psal. xxiii. 5. "Christ came, that his people might have life, and have it more abundantly," John x. 10.

4. This is a feast, which, as it wants none of the excellencies of any feast, so it has many, no where else to be found. 1. This is a spiritual feast, though held out by similitudes taken from outward and sensible things: so our Lord tells us, when treating, in the like expressions, of the same matter. Away with carnal thoughts then; it is spiritual food you are this day to expect, John vi. 63. 2. It is a heavenly feast, "The bread of God which came down from heaven," even he that "giveth life to the world," John vi. 32, 33. This is angels' food, or rather more. 3. It is a feast incomparable, for the excellency, variety, suitableness, plenty of the provisions, and its long continuance: but of these more anon. 4. It is a free feast: all is here "without money and without price," Isa. lv. Here I might add many other general excellencies of it. Of this you may take plenty without excess; it is safe food, nay, it is saving; the table is full of salvation. 5. I add, as to this day's feast, to which you are now invited in this gospel ordinance of the Supper of our Lord, a solemn gospel institution, stamped with his appointment and warrant, nay, command. As to this, I say, we only crave leave to add this one general observation; every feast is a solemnity, but this day's feast is appointed with a respect to three of the most solemn occasions, all concurring, that ever were. First, Newly reconciled friends are to feast together, in sign of reconciliation, and give mutual assurances of firm friendship. Compare 1 Cor. x. 16, with

2 Cor. v. We are to have communion in the blood of reconciliation. This is a feast of reconciliation, solemnizing the happy composition of the most fatal quarrel ever fell out. Second, This is a marriage feast: here the espousals of the King's son to the bride he has, in astonishing condescendance, chosen, are solemnized. Third, This is the feast, which we call by a special name, A *service*. When heirs are seized of great estates, there are wont then to be great entertainments, which we call a service, because then they are served heirs to the estates; well, on this occasion the bride, the Lamb's wife, is to be seized and infest, and presented with a sealed right to her Lord's glorious inheritance. How great then must the entertainment, the feast be, that is prepared by the Lord of hosts, so great a person, for solemnizing at once, three so great occasions! But to proceed.

VII. If you further ask, What are the materials provided for this solemn feast? The text answers, "Fat things, fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees, wines on the lees, well refined." Now this tells you,

1. That there is here provision for a complete feast, whatever is necessary for food. There is meat, and there is drink; "fat things and wines."

2. Every thing that is provided is good, nay, the best in its kind; "fat things full of marrow, wines well refined."

3. There is plenty of them, "fat things" and *wines*, in the plural number: there is in our Lord's house, "Bread enough, and to spare."

4. There is here variety, "fat things" of different sorts, and variety of *wines*. To give you but a taste of the riches of that provision made for you in the gospel, know that there is here indeed, what the Rabbins among the Jews fancifully report of the manna, what will answer every one's taste and need. 1. There is preparation for quickening appetite: of this sort are the dispensations mentioned, Hos. v. 15. Cant. iv. 5. 2. There is milk for babes, "even the sincere milk of the word," 1 Pet. ii. 2. Heb. v. 14. 3. There is water, even "the water of life," to cool and assuage thirst, John iv. 4. There is "strong drink for him that is ready to perish, and wine for those that are of a heavy heart;" of which they may drink, "and remember their sorrows no more," Prov. xxxi. 6. 5. There is bread, the staff of life; nay, the bread of life, that not only strengthens, but gives life. 6. There is strong meat for them, who by reason of use, have their senses exercised, Heb. v. 14. 7. There are here cordials, delicacies for reviving of fainting weak ones, "spiced wines," Cant. viii. 8. There are fruits, apples, pomegranates: there is nothing wanting that is profitable or pleasant.

5. What is here provided is of wonderful virtue. Here is, 1. That wine that makes glad the hearts of those whom all the world could not cheer. 2. Here is that meat that not only strengthens but gives life. 3. This provision restores, revives, and renews youth; see Psal. ciii. 4. This feast works wonders, opens the eyes of the blind, makes the deaf to hear, and lame man to leap as an hart. Again, further, it makes them who share of it, live for ever. In one word, to say all, 5. This feast satisfies, whereas ye have spent all "your labour for that which does not satisfy."

6. In a word, here in this feast every thing for matter and manner are the best, in the best order and season, as becomes the state of the king. He that gives the very beasts every one their portion in due season, Psal. cvii

27 ; will not do less for his own people in so solemn occasions : every thing here must suit the state of the king, and the solemnity of the occasions.

VIII. If after all this any of you say, what means all this ? All that we have heard seems parables: we would know in plain terms, what we are to get or expect. To satisfy this, I shall condescend in plain terms upon a few particular dishes of this feast, and in the choice, I shall have a special eye to this ordinance which you are now to celebrate.

1. Then, O believing communicants, you may feed your eyes with a lively view of the most glorious, convincing, nay, astonishing evidence of the inconceivable tenderness of everlasting love, toward such inconsiderable worms as you justly reckon yourselves. God told his people of old, that who touched them touched the apple of his eye. Zech. ii. 8. But how hard was it for poor sinners deeply impressed with a sense of God's holiness, and their own sinfulness, to understand how this can be, or believe it: well, here you have an evidence that forces a conviction. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 10. "In this was manifested the love of God," as the preceding verse speaks. Here is an evidence that puts the matter beyond dispute, an evidence beyond what could have been, or desired, or expected. Some hints were given of this of old. But here it is in a lively representation appointed of God to convey in a clear impression of the glory of this pledge of love, and of the love appearing in it. Poor believer, how does this relish ? What ! no taste in the love of God ? no favour in bowels of inexpressibly tender love, and that manifested in a light, clear beyond the brightness of the sun at noon-day.

2. Here you are to be entertained with a seal, an evidence of remission of sin. Would you not have thought yourselves happy, if you could but have seen that there was forgiveness with God, and twice so, if you could have any the least hint that yours were forgiven. "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered," Psal. xxxii. 1. Well, here you have an evidence of it. Here you have a draught of the blood of atonement, of that sin-offering God has chosen, and cannot but accept, nay, has accepted. This cup "is the blood shed for many for the remission of sins." "Drink ye all of it." How does this taste ? is it not like new wine, going down sweetly enough, to make "the lips of them that are asleep to speak ?" Song vii. 9.

3. Here you have a pledge, a foretaste of your reconciliation with God, as well as a lively representation of the means whereby this peace was brought about. Here the God with whom you were at variance, to whom you were enemies in your minds, covers a table, invites you to his house ; and instead of dropping a crumb to such dogs, invites you to sit down, allows you intimate communion with himself, yea, and to see not merely his back parts, but his glory in the face of Jesus Christ ; in respect of which Moses's discovery and sight of the glory of God, may almost be said to have no glory. And meanwhile he lays not his hand on you in a way of wrath, Exod. xxiv. 11. he deals not with you, he pleads not with you by his strong power. Job xxiii. 6. No, but he will put strength in you. You might have expected to meet him as a bear robbed of her whelps: but here he meets you as a man does his friend, his intimate. Here is somewhat more noble and entertaining than the fatted calf, and all the music earth can elsewhere afford. Is not this, my friends, a sweet entertainment ?

4. Survey Christ's goods, read over his testament, inquire into all the

unsearchable riches of Christ, taste all the fruits of the Spirit. If there is any relish in these things, all these are set before you, exhibited to you in a sealed right. "This cup is the new Testament," sealed, confirmed, ratified "in his blood." Are you not bid take it? Have you no senses, or have you so lost your senses, that you can relish nothing here?

5. Poor souls, it may be some of you think, and sometimes say, 'The things we need to complete our happiness, the expense of grace that will be necessary to carry such weak and empty creatures through all the duties, temptations, and trials of our way, is so great; the crown, the weight of glory, and all that honour that is designed for the heirs of glory, so far surpasses our mean condition, that it looks like presumption, once to think of it, or hope for it: ah! how we faint and fear that we shall be refused, if we seek it; checked as presumptuous, if we offer to lay claim to it.' I know some have been so exercised; and it is a wonder there are not more so. Well, how will it please you, if God shall this day give you a pledge in hand, that will secure you; nay, more in hand than all that is behind? Oh! had we this, we would need no more: we always saw, since God opened our eyes, that there was enough in the covenant to make us as happy as heart could wish, but still it stuck here! But will he give this and that, and the other thing to us? Well, my friends, "God has not spared his only Son for you, but delivered him up to the death," and has offered him to you. Here he is again to give him to you, and seal the gift. Now, tell me, after God has gone thus far, can he stop at any thing that remains? "How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Are grace, or glory, or heaven, what you need or can name, in more esteem with God than his Son? Will he bestow him, and hold these back? Will he give him thus to you and for you, while yet enemies, and when ye are reconciled friends, heirs, children; will he stick at necessaries, food, and raiment, protection, or a share in his estate? Who dare entertain such a thought? How does this dish relish? This is not like the white of an egg! this is not unsavoury meat that cannot be eaten without salt.

6. To add no more here, you have the Lamb of God, that on the faith of which the Church of God lived for 4000 years. Here is the accomplishment of the great mother-promise that was longest delayed, and run most hazards as to its accomplishment, the performance of which was that whereon all the church's hopes leaned, its blessedness depended; and of this you have the complement set before you, which is enough to liberate the faithfulness of God from any suspicion for ever, and oblige to give entire credit to all the promises, though at the greatest distance, whatever seeming improbabilities, or real difficulties lie in the way of their accomplishment. Many other things of the like nature might be added, but this is sufficient for a taste. Now, I hope we have spoke plainly, and used no parable.

As to the Improvement, I think there will be no great need of insisting here. Time is very precious; much of it is spent.

I shall only ask, in the Lord's name, this great assembly one question, Are ye for us, or for our adversaries? Are ye on the Lord's side, or against him? I know by nature ye are all enemies: but are ye reconciled to him, to his laws, his providence, and his institutions? Are ye engaged against sin, fighting against sin, all sin, secret sins, beloved sins? Maintain ye a close and constant war against these? Or do ye allow any of them to live in peace with you? Can ye lay aside your weapons, while these are alive? If so, then ye are among the enemies the Moabites; this

feast is not designed for you : but if you fight under the banner of Jehovah Sabbaoth, the Lord of hosts, against all these sins that war against the soul, and can admit neither peace nor truce with any of them ; then I say, 1. Whatever you are, of whatever condition, station, relation, whatever you have heretofore been, for you is this feast this day prepared. What the Lord in the text promised, is this day prepared in this gospel solemnity ; the oxen and fatlings are killed, the wines are mingled, the table is covered, and we are sent to call you to the feast. 2. We cannot but congratulate your happiness : hail, ye blessed of the Lord ! Hail, people greatly favoured ! whom the Lord of hosts thinks fit to honour, so as to prepare you for so noble a feast, and it for you, and to set you at his table. 3. For the Lord's sake, think not light of this honour that is this day done you : it is not a small matter. Is it a small matter with you to sit at the table of the Lord ? 4. Open your mouths wide. If the edge of your appetite is not sharp, if your desires are not quick, cry to him who can help you : "The preparation of the heart is from the Lord." 5. For the Lord's sake mind where you are, when you approach his table, and beware of any unbecoming carriage. 6. Before ye step forward, look well that you be indeed among those who have a right to be there. A mistake in this may be of dangerous consequence. As for you of this congregation, I have offered you marks whereby you may try it ; and for strangers, I doubt not but by their respective ministers they are plentifully supplied. If any Moabites shall crowd in, as I do not want my fears that many may, here they may expect to be trodden down. 7. As for such of you whom the Lord our God has called, there remains no more at present, but to invite you, and welcome you in our Lord's name. "Come, eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved : Come, eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." He that has made this provision, shall satisfy you, poor souls, with bread, and abundantly bless your provision.

SERMON II.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED :

OR,

THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD IN HIM RENDERING THE
GOSPEL CALL EFFECTUAL.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks. Christ (viz. crucified) the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 1 COR. i. 23, 24.

WE are met this day to prepare for the celebration of the memorial of Christ's crucifixion or death. Now, I know not what can be more suitable to this end, than to endeavour to lead you into right thoughts of the nature, excellency, and importance of this death, which you are solemnly to commemorate : and there is the more need of this, that many now begin to be weary of this part of the gospel, and can scarce know, according to

their models of religion, what room to assign it. The subject is large, our time precious; we shall but glean, endeavouring rather to insist on what must not be omitted, than what may be said.

The apostle, in this digression, which begins ver. 17, and is continued to the beginning of chapter iii, tells us what is the most effectual way of saving sinners: And in this discourse, 1. He tells the vanity of all men's contrivances for this end, verses 19, 20, 21. 2. He tells us what means God had contrived, and that is the gospel, verses 18, 21. 3. He tells us what is the principal means of salvation held forth in the gospel, and that is Christ crucified, verses 17, 18, 23, 24. 4. He shows how this mean is to be used and applied, and that is, in and by the gospel dispensation; Christ crucified is to be held forth in the way of God's appointment, verses 17, 21. 5. He represents what entertainment it met with, when this was proposed, ver. 22. Jews and Greeks rejected this mean of salvation. 6. In the words of our text, ver. 24, he asserts the excellency of this mean, this way of salvation, notwithstanding of all the contempt cast on it.

In this verse shortly we may notice these four things. 1. We have the subject of the apostle's discourse; it is Christ, and that as crucified: this is plain from the preceding verse, and the whole context. Christ crucified, in the apostle's judgment, was the great subject of the gospel, which is the preaching of the cross, ver. 18. It was that he was principally concerned to hold forth to his hearers, and have them acquainted with, chap. ii. ver. 2. and in comparison of this, he counted all loss, Phil. iii. 10. It seems our apostle was of a different mind from many now-a-days, both at home and abroad, who think that men may be very good Christians, and effectually reach salvation, though they know little, or perhaps nothing of Christ's death: but this is not the only instance wherein our apostle has happened to be of a different mind from Rabbis of old, and of late, for which he has met with sharp enough censures, that, I fear, will one day bring the censurers under correction. 2. We have the excellency of this, in order to the salvation of sinners, which is the end now in view, as the whole context clears beyond exception: it is the power of God, the powerful mean by which God puts forth his power, to the salvation of them that believe: it is the wisdom of God, Rom. i. 16; it is the wise contrivance of God, Acts iv. 27, 28, whereby God designed, and really does manifest his wisdom and power in the salvation of the church. 3. We have the persons to whom it is so: it is them that are effectually called, whether Jews or Greeks: to them it was; they found it powerful; they approved it as the wisdom of God, and the power of God. 4. We have the certainty and firmness of this doctrine, notwithstanding of the contrary opinion of Jews and Greeks: this is insinuate in the adversative, but, in the beginning of the verse, denoting the opposition of this to their judgment, mentioned ver. 23.

Now from the words we offer this doctrine.

DOCT. "Christ crucified, held out in the gospel dispensation, is the powerful mean whereby God, in his wisdom, effectually saves all them that are called."

The doctrine needs no text to prove it; it is plain in the words; the context is full of it; the whole scriptures are so, as we shall see afterwards. In speaking to it, we shall,

I. Offer some plain remarks about Christ crucified.

II. Offer some explication of their character, for whom he was so.

III. Clear and illustrate the doctrine by some instances of the power of the death, the crucifixion of Christ.

IV. We shall make some improvement suitable to the occasion.

I. We shall offer some remark about Christ crucified: and,

1. Our Lord was indeed the Christ of God, the Messiah, the anointed; him had God solemnly set apart, and fully furnished to be the Saviour of sinners. He is the holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed, says the joyful congregation in their song of praise. Compare Mat. i. 21. with Luke i. 74.

2. The Christ of God, whom he ordained to save the world, was in the world, and by the world crucified, put to death. Jews and Gentiles, rulers and people, church and state, elect and reprobate, Acts iv. 27; a full representation of the world concurred to crucify the Saviour of the world. This is a common, but a very strange truth. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at the monstrous ingratitude of the world below. What a strange thing also is it, that he who was ordained, anointed to save the world, should die! the Prince of Life lose his life! the Saviour be destroyed, as it were! But this is not all for,

3. The Christ of God was sent into the world by God, to die, to be Christ crucified. God spared him not; he delivered him up: he gave his enemies power against him, as our Lord insinuates to Pilate. He bid the sword awake against him; he put him to grief, and bruised him. Strange! the Christ of God, by the determinate counsel of God, crucified! What must the matter be? which leads me to remark,

4. The Christ of God was not crucified for any sin of his own: He "was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He needed no atonement for his own sins, Heb. vii. 26, 27. He was "cut off, but not for himself," Dan. ix. 26: his enemies could find no fault with him: heaven proclaims him innocent. Accursed, therefore, are the notions that now spread amongst us, That there were rebellions in his lower faculties, &c. and the apologies for this are no better.

5. Christ was crucified, in the stead of sinners; for "he was cut off from the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken;" that is, not merely for our good, as Socinians speak: nor was it only or principally to leave us an example of suffering: but it was in our stead, in our place. This, Socinians, and they who of old and of late fall in with them, oppose: and I wish that some amongst ourselves, with their new and useless disputes about the sense wherein Christ bore our persons, had not contributed too much to the darkening this glorious truth, whereon all the power of Christ's death toward our salvation hangs. I shall tell you what the scripture says in this matter plainly: 1. Christ was made, or admitted by God, to be our surety, Heb. vii. whereas we only were at first bound by and to the law: he was now allowed to come in our bond, and was made under the law, Gal. iv. 5. whereby he became liable to answer all that the law required of us: and to this he willingly agreed. Though he was in the form of God, "he made himself of no reputation, took the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. 2. Our sins were charged on him; "God laid on him the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 6. and he bare them, even our sins, ver. 11. 3. He was punished for those sins, he was cut off from the land of the living, Isa. liii. 8. not for himself, Dan. ix. 26. but for the "transgression of my people was he smitten," Isa. liii. 8. 4. The punish-

ment he suffered for these sins was the punishment threatened by the law. "He was made a curse for us, to deliver us from the curse of the law," Gal. iii. 13. 5. His design in bearing this punishment was, that we might be delivered from the curse, as we see in the words last quoted. 6. His death is reckoned ours, that is, as undergone and suffered for us, and whereof the benefit should accrue to us. "If one died for all, then are all dead," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. We are crucified with him, buried with him. 7. His death and punishment, we are instructed to plead as payment, or satisfaction, when we are accused and called to an account; and we are to plead his resurrection as our discharge, as to all that can be required of us, in order to our justification. See Rom. viii. 34, 35.

II. Let us see who they are for whom Christ was crucified, and to whom he is the power of God. This is a dispute. I shall give you some plain scripture characters of the persons.

1. They are such as were given to him of the Father. His power is to give life to as many as are given him, John xvii. 2. who shall, all in time come to him, and none of them be lost, John vi. 37, 39.

2. They are in the text, those who are called, not merely externally, as those mentioned in the verse before, but internally and effectually, in opposition to them, and who are the same with the chosen, ver. 26, 27. compared with the text.

3. They are such to whom Christ is in time given, and with him all things, Rom. viii. 32. Here is the order. Christ, 1. Is delivered for us. 2. Given to us. 3. All things with him.

4. They are such as believe on him, receive him; to them the gospel is the power of God, Rom. i. 16.

Finally, I might tell you, they are God's people, Isa. liii. 8. Christ's sheep, John x. 11. The Church of God, &c.; but I pass these.

III. I shall now show, in some instances, that Christ crucified, or the death of Christ, is the power, and the wisdom of God to their salvation.

1. Christ's death, held forth in the gospel, is the power of God, the powerful mean, whereby sinners are called or converted. What is the great thing that prevails on sinners to turn to God? Why, it is the offer of a slain Saviour, Acts ii. 42. Three thousand are converted! Well, what was it that prevailed on them? Look the chapter; it is a sermon about Christ crucified. Who converted most to God? I believe never any did convert so many as our Apostle. Well, what means used he? It was the preaching of the cross, as he tells us in this context.

2. Christ crucified is the power of God to justification. This our apostle dwells upon in the first five chapters of the epistle to the Romans, and frequently elsewhere. The case is this, guilty man is called to account, accused for his sins before God. What plea shall he make; where shall there an answer be got that will effectually clear him? If judgment is given against him, he is undone.

The wisdom of men, heathens and Christians, have laboured to find pleas, and to this day new defences are still sought. Some are for pleading not guilty, denying. Others for excusing, extenuating faults, like Adam. Some for making amends, by vows to do better in time coming. Some promise to do more than is required. Some pretend to expiate their sin with their tears. Some are for penances. Some run to sacrifices of beasts. Others to barbarous human sacrifices. Others, to the sacrificing their own children. And some fearing all this not enough, would be

content to go to impossibilities, Micah vi. 6. Some place much in acts of charity. Others are for monastic vows, retirement, and mortification, as they falsely call it, or, to use the modish word, doing penance. Some for trusting to their own faith. Others to their sincere obedience, such as they can give. And, in effect, here they all land. We owe pounds, and we will pay pennies. You see there are two advantages. 1. God shall not have it to say, that he freely forgave them all. 2. They may say they have paid some, though not what they ought, yet what they could, and it were cruelty to exact more. Finally, some fearing all this not enough, run to a purgatory, or, in the new language, a state of purification. Look how hard man's wisdom is put to it, and yet not one of all, nor all these together, have power to justify and bring us off.

The wisdom of God by the gospel reveals the righteousness of God, Rom. i. 17. If a sinner that believes is charged, threatened with condemnation for sin, it bids him plead, Christ has died for sin, that is, has obtained a discharge, and is in heaven to make it good, Rom. viii. 34. This will powerfully bring us off; no other plea will; they are weak and foolish.

3. Christ's death is the power of God to sanctification. This must be cleared in an instance or two, especially as to mortification. 1. Christ's death is a satisfaction for sin, for the guilt of all their sins, that are partakers of it, and hereby sin loses its claim to their service. It is the power of God, to disable the foundation of sin's dominion. Sin has no right that pre-judges God's, but sin and Satan both have a sort of lawful dominion over us by our own consent, according to the rule, Rom. vi. 16; but as soon as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings and death, Phil. iii. 10. and so dead with him, Rom. vi. 4, 5, 2 Cor. v. 14. who died for sins, if sin pretend to reign, and say, we have yielded ourselves servants to obey it, we may now answer, We are dead, 2 Cor. v. 14, and so are no longer bound; for the law binds a man no longer than he lives, Rom. vii. 1. Again, our consent is declared null, our surety has suffered for it among the rest of our sins, and so it is dead, binds no more. Finally, sin, thou art condemned as a traitor, when we were, or our surety, was condemned for our submitting to thee, judgment was thereby given against thee; our old man is crucified with Christ, Rom. vi. 6; no service is due to a dead master, one legally dead. Thus we see the meaning of Rom. vi. 6. "He that is dead is freed," or, as the Greek has it, "justified from sin." He is powerfully secured against any right that sin claimed to his service. 2. Christ's death, as the price of our redemption from the power of sin, has powerfully purchased, that is, effectually, or really merited the communication of the Holy Spirit, who actually breaks the power of sin, by planting, actuating, supporting, strengthening, reviving the opposite principle of grace, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, whereby we are freed from the law of sin, and sin is mortified, Rom. viii. 2, 23. Now, Christ's death, as a price, purchased this, Gal. iii. 13, 14, and through him it is shed on us abundantly, Tit. iii. 6. Christ crucified is the power of God in a meritorious and real sense, to our salvation from the power of sin. 3. Christ's death, as an atonement, secures the acceptance of our service, and so removes discouragements, and affords the most effectual arguments to enforce holiness. Our labour is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58, but acceptable through him, 1 Pet. ii. 5. see 2 Cor. xv. 14, 15. Thus it is morally the power of God to sanctification. 4. Christ's death, as held forth in the gospel, is the mean made use of to make us holy, and so it, instru-

mentally, as it were, is the power of God to sanctification, 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is a principal part of that glory that changes us when we see it: we might allege many other instances of its influence in sanctification, as the patron of the destruction of the old man, Rom. vi. 4, 5, 6, and the like. No wonder souls that desire to be holy join with the apostle's desire, Phil. iii. 10.

4. Christ crucified, or his death, is the power of God, to our consolation, being the great pledge of God's love to us. God commended his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. v. 8, and this will bear much; see the context, ver. 6, 12. This is the spring of consolation.

5. Christ's death is the power of God, to assure us of all the other blessings of the covenant. It is the pledge that makes us sure that all the rest shall be given in their season; direction, strength, support, provision, protection, light, life, love; see Rom. viii. 32.

6. Christ crucified is the power of God to secure our acceptance, and obtain us safe access to the holiest, Heb. x. 16. We are safe, having the Lamb slain betwixt us and hazard. He has "borne the iniquity of our holy things," and we have "access," *i. e.* safe access, "into the holiest by his blood."

7. Christ's death is the power of God, to the overthrow of Satan: "by death, he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14. This may be understood by what was said about sanctification; Christ pays the debt, and so, 1. Satan the jailor loses right to detain us in prison. 2. We have a right to crave power to free us from the wrongous detainer.

8. Christ's death powerfully delivers from the sting of death, and that is, the guilt of sin. This has been cleared before, when we spoke of justification, Heb. ii. 15.

9. Christ's death is the meritorious price of our inheritance; "he died that we might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," Heb. ix. 15.

10. Christ's death confirms the testament, and so secures all grace and glory to us, Heb. ix. 16, 17.

We might speak further of its power in crucifying the world, and the like: but we pass these, and come to the application. Now, from what has been said, we may,

1. For information learn, 1. The manifold wisdom of God, that by a mean, so unlikely and foolish in men's apprehensions, brings about so many glorious effects; this is what the angels look into, and the redeemed round about the throne fix their eyes on, the Lamb that was slain. Again, we must learn,

2. That the doctrine of Christ crucified and its power, is a great, yea, the principal part, the glory of the mystery of the gospel, of the Christian religion: all models of religion that shorten its power cramp it into narrow bounds, pretend zeal for what they will, misrepresent the Christian religion, nay, miss it wholly; for all the power of our religion arises from the room that the powerful death of Christ has in it: and therefore, the Jesuits in the Indies who conceal it, the Socinians, Quakers, modern mystics, who leave little room for the power of the death of Christ, if not as an example, or a notable act of obedience, in a difficult duty, teach not the gospel.

3. The more directly and evidently any gospel ordinance represents or sets forth Christ as crucified, or Christ in his death, the more glorious, useful, and valuable it is. How great then is the glory of this ordinance ye

are now preparing for? How is he evidently set forth as crucified, in express words of revelation, and signs of his own appointment?

4. We may learn, that it is a great privilege to have those means whereby Christ is thus set forth evidently in his death; for these are the channels whereby all this saving power is conveyed to them that are called. There is no experience of this power, but by faith, "it is by faith we are saved," Eph. ii. 8. and where there is no divine command for a warrant, no institution to lay stress on, no promise to grip to, but a "Who hath required this?" staring us in the face, there is no place for faith. It is cursed doctrine many are now drinking in, that every mean we may fancy useful for this or that end, "ex. gr." mortifying sin, &c. may be used, this will bring in crucifixes, penances, and I know not what, yea, all the Pagan rites, this is a shoe for any foot: but, blessed be God, we have the means of God's own institution, that are the channels of this power, the ministration, the Spirit applying it, and "of these we are not ashamed," Rom. i. 16.

5. We may learn, that our religion is an experimental religion; it is a discovery of a saving remedy to perishing sinners, a remedy that is all power, and works many effects that may be, nay, that must be felt. Well then, if ye have no experience of the power of the death of Christ to those ends mentioned, ye are no Christians. Notions of truth make no man such, it is experience of the power of God, and sight, conviction of the wisdom of God herein, that does. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Use 2. For *trial*. Is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to them that are called? then try whether ye are called.

1. Your duty, at this time, is not to look at bread and wine; but to discern and remember Christ's death, and that as the power of God, and wisdom of God. This is plainly the apostle's discourse that you hear read at these occasions. Now, none can discern this, but those who are called, to others he is foolishness.

2. This is what communicants are bid try, why they are bid examine themselves, whether they are in case to discern the Lord's body? now only these that are called, are so. But how shall we know this? I answer, 1. Were ye ever made so sensible of, so convinced of your lost condition, your sin, your guilt, that ye could get no peace, no rest, no relief in your fig-leaf aprons; your excuses, promises of amendment, and other your best duties, nor nothing else, till ye got from the Lord a powerful discovery of Christ crucified? Nothing relieved the poor convinced sinners, Acts. ii. 37. till this came, ver. 38. 2. Have ye ever got such a discovery of the power and wisdom of God in the death of Christ, Christ crucified, as makes you not only not condemn it with the world, but makes you delight in it, dwell on it in your thoughts; place all your comfort and hope, in life and death, in duty and trials on it, counting all but loss, so you may get an interest in this, and find the power of it? Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10.

Use 3. For *exhortation*. Now, to you, who upon trial, dare say you are called, we have a word of exhortation. Is Christ crucified the power of God, and the wisdom of God? Then,

1. Think upon the death of Christ, remember it? Nay, I had almost said, can ye be Christians and think upon any other thing? It is a wonder that the thoughts of Christians can fix upon any other thing almost, that they are not full of this that is the channel of their salvation, and of all saving mercies. Will ye not think on that whereon all depends, for which

all is given you that ye want or expect? I know there are some that say, ministers preach too much of the death of Christ; we would have them press morality, we would have them preach duties, holiness, mortification to the world, the love of God. O poor ignorant souls! Is there any other way so effectual to bring about these ends as this? If Christ crucified is not preached, if he is not received, they will never be compassed. If we dwelt more here, we should be more holy, humble, mortified, love more. Other things will never do it; it is ignorance of the gospel that makes people prefer other things, and postpone this.

2. Celebrate the memorial of the death of Christ; has he bid you remember it, prescribed a way to do it in, and will ye not do it, and do it in the way of his appointment?

3. Prepare to remember it, prepare for the celebration of it; there is manifold wisdom to be seen, many powers to be felt in it: we have need to be prepared to discern, to improve, to claim them. How shall we prepare? What preparation is meet? I answer, 1. Ye that are learned men, scholars, students, learn to know this night that you are lost sinners, as well as others; and that your wisdom, your learning will not save you: the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. I design no reflection upon learning; nay, I would, were it needful, commend it to you: but I say this, because the want of this, as the verse preceding our text, made the learned Greeks cast at Christ. Learn then that you are lost, and that Christ crucified is the power of God, and the wisdom of God to salvation; this will be a meet preparation. Prepare to discern the manifold wisdom of God here. 2. As to others, nay, to you all, learned or unlearned, we say, look out, what are your hazards, dangers; here is to be presented to you Christ crucified, the power of God, the wisdom of God to save you from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, of Satan, of the world, fears. Look out what are your wants; here is a death that is a price for all you need, here is a rich testament, here is a confirmed testament without expenses, all is cleared: here ye may have a pledge that the testament is confirmed, that your name is in it. Nay, here ye may enter to possession, and obtain what ye need. Prepare room to receive, eyes to discern, dwell upon the thoughts of this, turn your eyes from other things. Here many things offer, but I may not encroach upon you, or others, who may entertain you better.

4. One word more, and I have done with you. Ye that are called, show forth his death, openly profess it; be not ashamed of it, avouch it before the world, that ye look on the death of Christ as the glory of your religion, and the power of God to salvation, now when it is contemned, when it is stumbled at. I must leave other inferences to be drawn by yourselves, I only offer this concluding exhortation.

Is Christ the power of God to salvation? O labour for experimental acquaintance with this power; power may be felt, let it be seen by your life that Christ is power, and that you have an interest in it; seek an experience of it this night for quickening grace, love, faith, repentance, and killing sin, and this will prepare you.

SERMON III.

DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS;

WITH THEIR

ENDS AND ADVANTAGES ISSUING IN CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE
AND ESTABLISHMENT.

While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. MAT. xvii. 5.

You may perhaps think, the choice of this subject upon the back of a communion somewhat strange; but if the matter is well considered, I know none more suitable, and this, I hope, shall be made appear in our progress. I shall, for clearing my way to the purpose we design to insist on, and evincing the suitability of it to this occasion, offer the few following remarks upon the context. 1. The Lord Jesus Christ did here upon the mount, gloriously manifest himself to three of his disciples; and here in like manner, in this ordinance, he hath been evidently set forth as crucified before you; and some, we hope, on this occasion, have seen his glory. 2. The disciples surprised and affrighted with the glory of the manifestation, knew not what to make of it, wist not what to say: but Peter begins to talk of making tabernacles, and dwelling on the mount: so some, perhaps, may be at a loss what improvement to make of this manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ in this sacrament. 3. While they are in this confusion, this seasonable instruction, as to the intendment and design of the vision, and manifestation in the words of our reading, is sent from heaven: hereby they are instructed what God designed, what they were called unto for their own advantage, and what return they should make unto the Lord for his goodness in the manifestation.

This then is the design of the words, to direct how to improve a notable divine manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the words then, more particularly we may notice,

1. The seasonableness of this instruction, "While he yet spake," at that very instant when Peter was bewraying his ignorance and mistake, this voice is sent to set them right again; divine instructions are well timed; grace comes in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. when we are turning to the right hand or the left, then it is the voice behind us saith, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

2. In the words, we may take notice of the manner of the Lord's appearance, when he comes to instruct, it is in a bright cloud overshadowing them; hereby pointing out to us, 1. That the Lord's appearances are suited to our necessities: when we are in the dark, God manifests himself in light, and as the light. 2. That the Lord appears, not only in a way suited to our need, but sweetly proportioned to our strength; he appears in brightness, but it is in a bright cloud: we are not able to bear the brightest light.

the direct beams of the glorious fountain of light, and can only look upon a reflected light: well, there is a cloud interposed to reflect what light we need, and keep us from the direct rays of that glory which we cannot bear; see Exod. xxxiii. 19, 20, &c. Again, 3. The manner of the Lord's appearance here, is in a cloud, to point out the swiftness of it, when his people's need requires sudden help; clouds are swift, hence we read of the Lord's "coming in clouds," and of "his making way upon the wings of the wind," Psal. xviii. 10. 4. The refreshment that is in divine manifestations, may be hereby intended, the bright cloud overshadowed them: shadows are refreshing in scorching heats, and divine manifestations are a shelter against temptations.

3. We have the means of instruction, which the Lord makes use of; it is a voice out of the cloud, a distinct, plain, sweet, and instructive sound; a mean that is first familiar to us, and so suited to our advantage; and which therefore, 2. Carries not in it that terror, which might indispose and put us out of case, for taking up what God designs to make us understand. And, 3. There appears much of condescension to their weakness, in their present confusion they were not capable to take up God's mind from the dark hints of a symbolical manifestation; wherefore God condescends to instruct them by plain words, in the meaning and design of the vision and their duty.

4. We have here a double note of attention, the one prefixt to the season and manner of God's appearance, the other to the instruction itself: hereby pointing out, 1. The natural unstayedness, stupidity, and inadvertency of the mind of man. 2. The importance of the things discovered. 3. The necessity of attention, in order to reach the things designed by them. 4. The necessity of observing every circumstance of divine manifestations, the matter, the manner, and the season.

5. We have here in the words the instruction itself, and this respects two, or perhaps, three things. 1. The confirmation of their faith, as to the great truths concerning the Son of God, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" as if the voice had said, the design of this view of his glory which ye have got, is not to be a rest, or matter merely of comfort and satisfaction to you at present, on which ye may sit down, and which you are to expect the continuance of; but it is to satisfy you fully that this Christ, whom the world contemns, rejects, opposeth, and persecuteth, and whom ere long you will see yet more deeply humbled; notwithstanding all which this is my beloved Son, in whom I delight, and for whose sake alone I accept of, and am well pleased with elect sinners. 2. We have a direction as to practice, "Hear ye him," *i. e.* However mean his appearance is at present, yet ye have reason to own him as your Lord, and to subject yourselves unto him: and to satisfy you of this, you have got this foretaste of the glory he will appear in after his humiliation is over. 3. The voice instructs us in the powerful influence of a confirmed faith upon practice; if we believe that he is the Son of God, hearing and obedience will follow upon it. The words afford many useful truths, but I shall single out this one,

DOCT. "That the great scope of special and solemn manifestations of the Lord's glory to his disciples, is to confirm them in the faith of the great foundation truths of religion, and thereby lead them to the obedience of faith."

That you may understand this truth the better, it is to be observed,

1. That by manifestations, we intend those discoveries which the Lord is pleased to make of himself, his attributes, his will, and works unto his people. 2. That these discoveries are of two sorts, special and common : This distinction our Lord teacheth us himself, in that discourse of his with Judas, not Iscariot, where we hear of manifestations which he gives to the world in the works of creation and providence, by the law written on the heart, and outward ordinances ; and we hear of special manifestations which he gives not unto the world. 3. These special saving manifestations to his own people, are again of two sorts, more ordinary, which they have for their common allowance, in the course of their walk with God, and more solemn or extraordinary, which the Lord affords them on some special occasions ; it is of this last sort, that in the doctrine is principally intended, though I shall not exclude even the more ordinary manifestations that occur to the Lord's people in the course of their walk. As for the common manifestations which he gives to the world, they come not within the compass of our consideration at present : as for scriptures confirming this purpose, they will occur afterwards ; at present, it is sufficient that the truth hath a plain foundation in the text. In prosecuting of it further, we shall in order discourse these five things.

I. We shall inquire in what way, and by what means it is, that God gives those solemn and special manifestations of himself.

II. What is intended by this confirmation in the faith of the truths of religion, that is the design of those manifestations.

III. What is that obedience of faith that follows on this confirmation, and is the other part of the design of special manifestations.

IV. We shall inquire how these manifestations do confirm our faith, and excite to obedience.

V. I shall confirm the truth of the doctrine.

I. The first general head, by what ways and means doth the Lord give to his people these special and solemn manifestations ? In answer to which, I say,

1. He does it in ways and by means extraordinary and miraculous at some times, means that are quite out of the common road. There are miracles in grace, as well as in nature ; there are in God's dispensations of grace ordinary means, which for most part he useth, in governing and carrying on his work in the church ; and there are extraordinary ways to which sometimes he hath recourse. Of this last sort are visional representations, dreams, voices, inspirations, and the like. Such manifestations Moses and Elias, and many others of the worthies of old had, and such is this in the text ; and of this sort of manifestations it is, that Elihu elegantly discourseth, Job xxxiii. 14, 15, 16.

2. He gives special and solemn manifestations of his glory by the standing works of creation, not merely by presenting them to their view ; this all men daily have, and thus they are always presented to the people of God : but he then manifests himself solemnly by them, when he opens remarkably his people's eyes, gives them an unusual light, shines on his works, and gives them a special discerning of the prints of his glory in them ; such the Psalmist had, when he composed the 8th and 19th Psalms. Again,

3. He gives special manifestations of himself, when he is pleased to shine in an extraordinary way upon his ordinary works of providence, thereby enabling them to discern with unusual evidence, the beamings of his glory

in them; such a manifestation the Psalmist had, when he composed that sweet meditation which we have in the 104th Psalm; so great was the glory of it, that he is put to pause in the midst of his song, and give vent to the deep sense he had of the glory of the Lord shining in his works, ver. 24. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

4. The Lord manifests himself solemnly to his people, in and by special providences, either towards themselves, or the church in general. Thus he manifested himself to Abraham, in stopping the execution of his son Isaac; Gen. xxii. 11—15; to Jacob, in delivering him from Esau; to the church in Egypt, at the Red-sea; in the wilderness, at Jordan; and upon many other occasions.

5. The Lord manifests himself some times gloriously to his people in secret duties, as to Hannah, to Daniel, &c.

6. The Lord manifests his glory in a special and solemn way, by glorious works of grace inwardly wrought upon them. Thus he manifests himself to his people, at first conversion, when he forms the new creature, translates them out of darkness into marvellous light, and afterwards discernably breaks the power of strong corruptions, rebukes violent and strong temptations, or fills the soul under great trials with overflowing consolations; such the martyrs and sufferers have had, and by them they were made exceeding joyful in their afflictions, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.

7. The Lord manifests himself thus by his written word, when in reading, or in meditation upon it, he opens their eyes, to behold the wonders of his law in a warming and enlivening light, and instructs them clearly in things concerning himself; such the disciples going to Emmaus had, when Christ conversed with them, and opened the scriptures to them, Luke xxiv. 32.

8. The Lord most frequently gives these solemn and special manifestations in public ordinances; "He loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," Psal. lxxxvii. 2. His glory and power have been seen in the sanctuary, Psal. lxxiii. 2; it is the "place where his honour dwells;" and they who out of love to the habitation of his house inquire there, "do behold the beauty of the Lord;" compare Psal. xxvi. 8. with xxvii. and 3. And hence it is, that in his temple, every one speaks of his glory.

9. The Lord doth frequently give such solemn and special manifestations in sealing ordinances, and particularly about the time of the administration of the Lord's supper. It was about this occasion that he gave that glorious discovery of himself, that makes up one of the sweetest parts of the book of God; I mean, the 14th and 17th chapters of the gospel of John, as you may see by John xiii. 31. compared with chap. xviii. at the beginning. In this ordinance, if any where, Christ is evidently set forth crucified; here we are to remember him, and he is never behind with any; "he meets them that rejoice and work righteousness, those that remember him in his ways."

II. We now proceed to the next general head, to inquire what is intended by this confirmation in the faith of the fundamental truths of religion, which is one great part of the design of these solemn manifestations: and here we shall show, what is the import of that expression "this is my beloved Son," &c.

in so far as it points out the design of this manifestation. Now, I conceive that hereto these four truths belong.

1. Increase of knowledge about the truths of religion. "This is my beloved Son," is as much as if it had been said, You have got this manifestation of his glory, that you may know more distinctly and satisfyingly, that this is my beloved Son, and what glory belongs to him, notwithstanding his majesty is now for a time veiled. Our minds are naturally dark, and even after saving illumination is begun, we know but in part; and, from this darkness, wavering proceeds; what we know but darkly, we easily suspect, and easily slide into mistakes about it. Now the Lord, when he manifests himself, either discovers somewhat more than was formerly known, or sets what before was known, in a clearer light, and hereby brings his people to a more full understanding of divine truths in their several concernments, whereby the mind is further established or confirmed about them. "Now know I," saith the Psalmist, "that the Lord saveth his anointed," Psal. xx. 6. "Now I know," saith Jethro, "that the Lord is greater than all Gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them," *i. e.* Though I did know somewhat of this before, yet now I understand it more distinctly, and am further confirmed in it.

2. To this establishment and confirmation in faith, there belongs a fullness of persuasion, a satisfaction, composure, or quietness in the soul, in believing the truth, in opposition to uneasiness, fears, jealousies, and doubtings. "This is my beloved Son;" that is, I have thus manifested his glory, that you may not henceforth, by the meanness of his appearance or any further steps of humiliation, be brought to hesitate, or in the least doubt, of his being my beloved Son; but may rest fully assured of his being so, in spite of all contrary appearances. "Now know I, that the Lord saveth his anointed," is as much as if he had said, I have no suspicion, hesitation, or scruple any more about it. Thus Abraham was confirmed as to the truth of the promises, or was fully persuaded in his own mind, resting composed in the faith. Much of the vanity of the mind of man, lies in an inclination and readiness to fluctuate about, and suspect divine truths: special manifestations are designed to cure the darkness, and hereby to bring the soul to composure and rest in the faith of them, which is not the least part of confirmation.

3. This establishment or confirmation, at which manifestations aim, implies fixedness, adherence and constancy of persuasion, or strength of faith in opposition to shocking difficulties that may come in our way. "This is my beloved Son," you are not only now to give up with your suspicions, doubtings and fears of mistake; but afterwards, when this glance is gone, and when you shall see him mocked, spit on, and put to death, you are not to stagger at the truth through unbelief, but must hold to it. Thus Abraham staggered not, but remained fixed in his persuasion, being nothing moved by contrary appearances to shock his faith, but against hope believed in hope, Rom. vii. 17.—20.

4. There belongs to this confirmation in faith, a confidence in laying stress upon the truth, of which we are thus fixedly persuaded; so Abraham did, and this is the genuine fruit of it, "they that know his name put their trust in him," Psal. ix. 10. And hereof we have a notable example in Psal. xx. The Psalmist being satisfied and confirmed in the truth, ver. 6. "Now know I, that the Lord saveth his anointed," proceeds in the subsequent verses, to lay the stress of his preservation from all

dangers on it. Thus in the text, "This is my beloved Son," &c. is as much as if it had been said, You have got this manifestation, that you may be encouraged and emboldened to flee and cleave to him, lay stress on him, as to your acceptance with God, and use him on all occasions.

III. We now come to show what is that obedience of faith that flows from, and follows upon this confirmation, which is intended here by the words, "Hear ye him." Manifestations are designed, first, To satisfy us as to truth; and then, ultimately, To lead to an answerable deportment. This "Hear ye him," then imports,

1. An acknowledgment of him as the Lord, we must call Jesus Lord, 1 Cor. xii. 3. that is, Acknowledge or own, close with, and accept of him, as one to whom obedience is due: no sooner did he manifest himself to Thomas, John xx. 26, 27. and establish him in the faith, but presently, ver. 28. he cries out, "My Lord and my God."

2. "Hear ye him," imports attendance on him to receive his commands: it is the business of servants and hand-maids to wait their master's will, Psal. cxxiii. 2; and like Isaiah, to be ready at every call, to say, "Here am I," Isa. vi. 8.

3. "Hear ye him," That is, Credit him entirely; you are not to question any thing he says, nor dispute any of his commands.

4. "Hear him," *i. e.* Obey him, yield a practical compliance with whatever he enjoins; the gospel is sent to all nations for the obedience of faith, that crediting him, we may practically comply with his will.

5. "Hear ye him," imports the reasonableness of our obedience; we are indeed to obey whatever he enjoins, but not till once he hath satisfied us, that he is the Lord, one every way worthy of obedience, and made us distinctly understand his will. Thus religion is a reasonable service; first, we see him worthy of command; then own him as such. Next, we hear him give out his will, and thereon obey.

6. "Hear ye him," that is, Hear him only; we may call none other master; for one is our Master, even Christ.

7. "Hear ye him," imports a readiness in our obedience; you must obey him at hearing, as the word is, Psal. xviii. 44. No sooner must we hear, but instantly we must comply.

8. "Hear ye him," that is, You must yield universal, unlimited obedience, without any reserve; your obedience must be universal. 1. As to the matter, we must obey and believe him in all things; whatever he reveals, we must assent to it, how many objections soever lie against it; and what he enjoins, we must do whatever difficulties are in the way; of both we have an instance in the case of Abraham. 2. Ye must hear him in whatever manner he speaks to you, not only when he speaks as God doth hear from heaven the throne of his glory, where the greatness of his present appearance reflects a majesty upon his words and commands; but even after, when he is down from the mount, and speaks to us in his ordinary preaching, or by the mouth of the meanest instruments he is pleased to employ, even when the meanness of their appearance darkens, as it were, the evidence of their being his servants, yet even then we are to discern, hear, believe, and obey his voice. 3. We must yield universal obedience as to times; we must hear and obey him at all times, constantly, even unto the end.

This we have insisted upon more largely, because of its suitableness unto the present occasion; it is what you are called to, and is the best re-

turn that you can give the Lord for his kindness upon this occasion, to hear his Son.

IV. We are now come to our next inquiry, How these solemn and special manifestations do confirm or establish in the faith of the fundamental truths of religion? In answer to this question, which would deserve more time than we can now allow it, I shall only offer the few following particulars.

1. In divine manifestations, there always is a convincing and overpowering light or evidence that sweetly sways the mind, and draws it powerfully, to assent and rest satisfied in the truth of what is thus manifested. Evidence is always the ground of persuasion, the more there is of it, the more quiet and easy the mind is; and this is the glory of divine manifestations, that there is much of this convincing evidence in them, whatever doubts the soul may be under before, yet when the Lord appears, at the brightness that is before him, these dark clouds flee away, and the most wavering soul is pleasantly constrained to give up all its doubts, and yield its assent to divine truths enforced by this overpowering light, like Thomas that cries out, "My Lord and my God," John xx. 28. or like Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the King of Israel, thou art the Son of God," John i. 49. and like the Israelites, even the rebellious Israelites, "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and said, the Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God," 1 Kings xviii. 39. Much more is the evidence convincing, where there is a renewed understanding to discern it; objections cannot stand before it.

2. In divine manifestations, there is not only overpowering evidence, as to the truths; but there is instructive light, as to the nature of the things revealed; either somewhat formerly not known, is made known, or what was formerly known, is now more distinctly and clearly revealed: saving manifestations always inform or enlighten the mind. Now as the evidence of the manifestation overpowers unto an assent for the time, fixeth a conviction, repels objections, making them unable to shake the mind while it lasts: so this instructive light, as to the nature of the things revealed, takes off the force of them, and removes, if duly improved, the ground of them in time coming; all objections flow from ignorance of things, and still as knowledge increaseth, these vanish. In this manifestation here made to the disciples, we have a pleasant instance of this sort, here we have a sweet instruction obviating and laying a foundation for answer to the principal objections against Christ; four things were much insisted on against him. 1. Some stumbled at him, because his appearance was mean; there was no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired; but in this manifestation, the vail was taken off, and he was seen in his glory, and they were instructed that he had robes of glory, though for a while he thought meet to lay them aside. 2. He was accused of opposition to Moses and the prophets; here in this manifestation, the sweet harmony and consent betwixt them is evidently discovered, while Moses the famous founder, and Elijah the zealous reformer and asserter of the Old Testament economy meet with, sweetly converse together, and agree with Jesus Christ. 3. Many stumble at his death, as inconsistent with the honour and glory of the Messiah; but here the sinews of this objection are cut, he never appeared to them in such glory as now, when he is upon a solemn conversation on this subject; for we are told this by the Spirit of God, that they spoke

of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 4 Many stumble at his pretending and owning himself the Son of God ; but here his pretensions are justified by glory answerable to that relation by the attendance of Moses and Elias, two of those whom God most honoured among the sons of men ; and to crown all by a voice from heaven, directly asserting the justice of his pretensions. Thus we see that divine manifestations sweetly instruct in the nature of the things revealed ; and thereby cut off objections, whereby the mind is not only composed, but kept in quiet. Many other instances of the like nature I might give from scripture, but the narrow limits to which our time is confined, will not allow.

3. There is always in these special and solemn manifestations, some taste of the sweetness and goodness of the Lord himself, and of divine truth, as a beam from that sweet fountain of truth, that draws over the will and affections to cleave unto the Lord, and unto truth ; and this is the real spring of stability and firmness in truth. Dry notions will never keep men stable : they who have received the truth, but not in the love thereof, will be soon drawn over to quit it for delusions ; but in divine manifestation there is still somewhat of enjoyment that obliges them to think, that it is good to be there, as Peter says in the verse before our text : and this engages the soul to stick fast ; for the spring of defection is commonly the struggling of the will, and aversion of the affections ; these increase our darkness, occasion wavering, and suggest prejudices against the Lord, his truth, and ways.

4. Special and solemn manifestations of the Lord's glory are always accompanied with an experience of the power of truth : there is a manifold power attending divine truths and manifestations ; they have a soul-quickening, composing, warming, and soul-transforming power ; and of this power the people of God have sweet experience, when he manifests himself ; when they see his glory, they also feel his power in the sanctuary. This power makes strong and abiding impressions on the soul, that go deep into it, and stick fast. When he appears in his glory, he lays the hand of his power on them, and by it raises them up, and says unto them, " Fear not," Rev. i. 17. this is strongly engaging, and sensible. It was the feeling of this that had a reviving influence on the disciples. " Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. It was not so much the notions of truth that stuck with them, as the power that went along with them. This will embolden people to avouch, plead for, and stick to truth, whoever is against it, and whatever it cost them, when they find the good effects of it upon their own souls. " I am ready," says the apostle, " to preach the gospel, as much as in me is, to you also that are at Rome ; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," Rom. i. 15, 16.

5. In divine manifestations of the Lord's glory, there is always a suitability unto the case, the trials, and necessities of the persons to whom he manifests himself ; either they are suitable to their present condition, or to duties, trials, and difficulties they have been in, or shall speedily be called to. When Abraham is to leave his Father's house, and to go out not knowing whither, to leave friends, relations, and means, then God manifests himself to him as God almighty, or God all-sufficient, one that in the want all things, could be all things to him. One who could protect, be a shield and defence, and supply him, or be his rich reward and up-making for all

that he could quit or lose in following God, Gen. xv. 1. and xvii. 1. When Israel is in bondage, the Lord manifests himself as Jehovah, that is, the performer of promises, Exod. vi. 3. Here, when the disciples are to be melancholy witnesses of Christ's sufferings, they get a pleasant view of his glory, to arm them for it beforehand. Now, every thing is more or less sweet to a person, as it is more or less agreeable to his case, necessities, and trials; and this is that which makes divine manifestations pleasant, when they are found sweetly to suit the case, and meet with the need of the Lord's people. Nothing will please a hungry man save meat, nor a thirsty man but drink. He that would despise rubies, when starving for hunger, will greedily grasp at a piece of bread. And this is the glory of divine manifestations, that they ever exactly meet with the necessities of the people to whom they are made. That which makes people desert any way they have been in, is the finding it fail them in their need, and not answer their case, but the Lord reveals that what they now need, is to be found in him; and this makes them cheerfully abide by him. And though, at present, they know not what these things mean, yet afterwards they come to know more clearly, and this makes them stable, and engages to adhere firmly. It may be the disciples knew not well now what need there was of this view of Christ's glory, but afterwards they well understood it.

6. These manifestations always humble, and humility is the strength of all grace. When Isaiah saw his glory, he was deeply abased; and cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips," Isa. vi. 5. Job, when he saw him, loathed and abhorred himself, Job xlii. 4, 5. Now self-confidence is the greatest weakness: when we trust to ourselves, we trust our support to a drop cut off from the fountain, that will not last: when we are strong in our own eyes, we are then weak: Peter was never so weak, as when proud and self-confident. On the other hand, humility is the going out of ourselves, and laying all the stress on the Lord: it has the promise of his presence, "He will dwell with the humble, he will look to him; he gives grace to the humble; he hears the desire of the humble."

V. The confirmation of the doctrine is that which follows next: we might have done this at first, but ye will understand it the better now, after the truth is explained.

This truth then, that it is the great scope and design of special and solemn manifestations of the Lord's glory, to confirm his people in the faith of the great truths of religion, and thereby to lead them to obedience, is evident,

1. From express divine testimonies; "And many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." And in the Old testament, whenever the Lord makes any manifestation of himself, or promises to do it, he always adds this account of the design, "that ye may know that I am the Lord." This is repeated in scripture, times almost without number: and from that very observable, but little observed expression, we may notice, that even the Lord's people have need to be taught this, "that God is the Lord." It is not such an easy matter, as many think, to come to believe that God is.

2. This was once and again spoke plainly by a voice from heaven; at this occasion, and on Christ's baptism. When the Lord appeared or dis-

covered somewhat of his glory, it was intimated by a voice from the excellent glory, that the design of all was, to make them believe, or confirm them in the belief of this, "that Christ is the Son of God."

3. This effect it had upon the disciples, it confirmed them in the faith, when the Lord manifested his glory; and it is observed with approbation, John ii. 11. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on his name."

4. We find the saints taking notes, as it were, of such manifestations, for their own establishment. Abraham sets up his Jehovah-jireh, Gen. xxii. 14. and Jacob his El-Elohe-Israel, Gen. xxxiii. 20; to keep this in their minds, that God, the God of Israel, he is the God, and he seasonably steps in times of extremity.

I am sensible that many other things would have pertinently fallen under our consideration here, and had been necessary, if our time could have allowed.

1. It might have been inquired, what are these fundamental truths, wherein the Lord would have his people confirmed? I might have condescended on many: he designs to have them established in the faith of this, "that the Lord he is God;" in the faith of these truths that concern the person of Christ, that he is the beloved Son of God, God in our nature; and in those that concern his offices, that in him he is well pleased with us, and that acceptance with him is only to be had by his beloved Son; with many others of the like nature.

2. It might have been inquired, wherefore is it necessary that the Lord's people should not only believe the truths, but that they should be confirmed or established in the faith of them. In answer to this, I might have showed you at length, that they are great things, and so not to be received, but upon the strongest grounds, that there is much to venture on them; we are to venture all for time and eternity on them; and therefore we had need be well secured that the foundation be good, when we venture so much: there are many things to try us, and we had need to be well established. The great design of enemies is to overturn the foundations; and therefore we had need to be well fixed in them. We cannot glorify God, unless we offer him reasonable service; and our service can never be reasonable, if we are not clear and well fixed, as to the grounds we go on. In a word, we might have made it appear that our safety, our comfort, our usefulness for the good of others, the honour of religion, and the glory of God, are all concerned in this matter, and cannot be obtained, but by being established in religion.

3. It may be inquired, How Satan's delusions, and divine manifestations may be distinguished. In answer hereto I might have offered many things. True divine manifestations are to be expected, (whatever God sometimes, especially at first conversion, may do in a way of sovereignty) only in the way of duty. While, like the disciples here, we are in Christ's company, they enlighten the mind in the solid knowledge of God; by them we are led to know more distinctly, that he is the Lord, and that Christ is the way to him, that in him he is well pleased. They are always suitable to the scripture; they lead to obedience to hear the Son of God; they humble the persons that get them; they endear the Lord and his way.

4. Here also it might have been inquired, What influence hath this confirmation in faith upon obedience? And in answer to this, I might have showed you, that it strengthens the principle of obedience, which is faith in

the word ; it strengthens the motives to obedience ; it takes away hinderances ; it quickens the soul : but these we must wave, and on to the application.

It now only remains that we draw some inferences, or make some short improvement of the point hitherto discoursed ; and because we have already insisted long, here we shall be short.

Is it so then, that it is the great design of divine manifestations, to confirm the people of God in the faith of the great truths of religion, and lead them to the bestowing of faith ? Then we may infer, hence,

1. Surely atheism and unbelief are deeply rooted in the hearts of all ; and even the Lord's people, by nature, are as much under their power as others : if it were not so, what would be the need of confirming, establishing manifestations ?

2. All have reason to lay their account to meet with assaults about the truths of religion. When the Lord is at so much pains to establish, it says, that shaking trials are likely to come : he doth nothing in vain.

3. It says this to you, that establishment in the faith is a matter of very great moment and importance ; otherwise God would not, besides all ordinary means for begetting and strengthening faith, give such special and unusual manifestations.

4. Learn here also, how abominable that principle is that many have in their heads and mouths, That there is no great need to look what people's principles are, if they live but well. To make men live well, they must not only have good principles, be found in the faith, but be well rooted and established in it ; and this is not so easy a matter as many take it to be.

5. Think it not strange that ye meet with tossings about the fundamental truths in religion ; you see the Lord's people have met with such, and here the Lord provides help against such trials.

6. We may hence learn also, that our own reasonings will not quiet our souls : peace and joy are only to be had in believing ; and divine manifestations are needful to draw out, and strengthen faith.

7. Wonder at the condescension of God, that manifests himself to the sons of men. I shall now pass many other inferences for instruction, trial, reproof, and wind up all in some short addresses. *First*, To those who are strangers to all saving and special manifestations. *Second*, To such who miss them at present, and lament their want of them. *Third*, To those to whom the Lord has, in any measure, manifested himself, at this time.

First, To these who are strangers to all saving and special manifestations.

1. There are some of you who never had any special manifestations of the Lord, and care not much for it. This is too evident to be denied. 2. Are there not many of you who live in sin, walk in darkness, in the practice, love of, and regard to, known evils ? If you say you have any manifestation of, or fellowship with God, you are, by himself, pronounced liars, 1 John i. 6. 3. Are there not many of you who never saw any beauty in Christ, to make you prize him, or part with any thing for him ? You never saw that worth in the pearl, as to engage you to think of parting with all, that you might get the pearl, Mat. xii. 44, 46. 4. Are there not many of you, who have no desires of, use for, nor endeavours after discoveries of the Lord's glory ? It is otherwise with them, who were ever brought to know any thing of the Lord, Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2. and xxvii. 4. 5. Are there not many among you, who do not trust Christ, either as to righteousness, direction in your way, or strength ? And is not this a clear proof, that ye

know him not? For they that know his name, will put their trust in him, Psal. ix. 10.

Now to you who are in this case, I have a few things to offer: and, 1. You are yet in darkness: when the Lord is so many ways set before you, and you have never discerned his glory, it must certainly be, because there is no light in you. 2. You have lost the benefit of all ordinances; for this is the drift, the great scope of them, John xx. 30, 31. 3. In particular you have missed the mark here in this ordinance; for the design of it is to hold Christ forth that he may be discerned; and since you have not discerned him, ye have missed the aim of it. 4. If now, or formerly, you have approached this table, you “have eaten and drunk unworthily, incurred the guilt of his body and blood, eaten and drunk judgment to yourselves, not discerning the Lord’s body,” 1 Cor. xi. 29. 5. Ye are poor unstable souls. It is impossible ye can be firm or stable in any matter of religion. No man knows God, save the person to whomsoever the Son manifests or declares him. 6. If trials come, and ye meet with any assault as to the truths of religion, ye that never had any manifestations, will soon quit your hold, and give up with truth. They that have not received truth in the love of it, will soon give it up. 7. Ye have no part nor portion in heaven; you have no title to it. This can never be had save by Christ, and an interest you can never have in him, save by his manifesting himself to you. Ye can have no notion of it: he only can tell you what heaven is, and what you are to expect beyond time; and so you cannot really desire that which you cannot know. I know ye all think, O! if we were in heaven! but this is only a heaven of our own imagination and framing. But it is impossible for any unrenewed man to wish seriously for that heaven, where holiness and happiness are for ever linked together. In a word, ye are not meet for it; for it is only the viewing of the Lord’s glory that changes us unto his likeness, and so makes us meet for “the inheritance of the saints in light,” 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Well then, poor miserable souls, 1. Bethink yourselves seriously of the misery of your case. 2. Cry to God, that he may open your eyes to see it. 3. Cry that the Lord may manifest himself to you. 4. Wait on him in the way of duty. 5. Guard against sin, known sins that do provoke the Lord to hide his face. 6. Beware ye rest not in this miserable case, estranged from God, from Christ, and from saving light.

Second. I shall next offer a word to them, who, though it may be formerly they have known somewhat of divine manifestations, miss them at present. 1. Perhaps the Lord hath manifested himself, but ye have not known him. This was the case with many, when Christ came in the flesh. Because he appeared not in all that glory that they expected, they would not suffer themselves to believe it was he. Well, perhaps it may be so with you. Though Christ hath manifested himself as the heart-searcher, discovering sins, and as holy, in reprovng you for them, as God almighty, inviting you to trust him, and so forth; yet because you have not been filled with joy, got apples, and the like, you think you have got nothing. 2. If it really is so, is there not a cause why he has hid himself? Well, search it out, turn inwards, observe how matters stand, how they formerly have been, and now are; and if there be iniquity in thy hand, then remove it far from thee. Beware of sitting down in this case, without, at least, the ordinary evidence of the Lord’s countenance: that is dangerous: for here is the plain road to backsliding. We miss, and are uneasy about it: we want

his presence for a while, and our trouble grows less; and then we want, and turn easy, and content to want. This is a dangerous case. 4. Yet quarrel him not; he must be allowed his own will, even in the more ordinary manifestations of himself in the course of our walk with God; much less is he to be limited in this, where there is more of sovereignty in the dispensation. 5. Entertain kind thoughts of him, even when he hides himself. 6. Let him hear oft from you, when ye see him not. 7. Keep his words, and then you are in the way to get this want supplied, John xiv. 21, 23. 8. Be humble; he has promised to look to the humble, Isa. lxvi. 2. 9. Stir up yourselves to take hold on him; wait on him in all duties of his appointment. Go yet a little further, and then, 10. I say, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." He shall be seen in due time; he will manifest himself distinctly to you, and make you to hear his voice, and behold his glory, to your unspeakable comfort.

3. I shall now close all with a word to those to whom the Lord has, upon this occasion, manifested himself in a special and solemn way. And, 1. We say to you, try well that ye be not deceived with delusions, instead of manifestations. When Christ offers the true ware, Satan is then ready with his counterfeit. 2. Do not rave, and talk of building tabernacles; this will not last, the disciples must down from the mount again. 3. Be humble; mind, these manifestations will not keep you from mistakes: ye see the disciples fell into mistakes, when on the mount, and fell in their walk afterward; therefore be humble. 4. Look up for divine teaching, how to guide your manifestations; what use to make of them. 5. Be sure ye mind that this is always one great design of them, to establish and confirm you in the faith of the first and great truths of religion; and pray improve them to this purpose carefully.

SERMON IV.

THE FRAME OF A GRACIOUS SOUL IN VIEW OF COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

The voice of my Beloved; behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. CANT. ii. 8.

WERE the enjoyments of the children of God, those blessed souls who are espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ, as firm and abiding, as sometimes they are great, they would readily, with the mistaken disciples, talk of making tabernacles, and of dwelling upon this earth: heaven would not be desired, or longed after. But the many, the great, sad, sudden, and unexpected interruptions to which their sweetest enjoyments are exposed, in this house of their pilgrimage, are sufficient to cure them of this mistake, and teach them the difference betwixt heaven and earth.

The spouse, by whom is meant the believer, that is enamoured of, and espoused to our Lord Jesus Christ, in the words immediately preceding our text, is in as happy a state, as a soul on this side heaven could be; what a ravishing description gives she of it! "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought

me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." And as her enjoyments were thus great, so her care to retain them was proportionally so, as appears by the charge she gives to the daughters of Jerusalem in the verse immediately preceding our text, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please." This was indeed a happy state, and happy had she been in it, had it been continuing; but this it was not; for we see a sad and sudden turn in the face of her affairs in the words of our text. She, who just before was fast in the embraces of her beloved, is now removed from him by interposing hills and mountains, which Christ must come over, ere she can enjoy him as she had formerly.

Now, for understanding of the words, ye must know, 1. That they are the bride's words: the bride, that is, the believing soul who is espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ, and has, by faith, accepted of him for its Lord, head, and husband, is here introduced speaking. 2. Jesus Christ the beloved, who, but in the verse before, had his left hand under her head, and his right hand embracing her, is now at a distance from her, that is, he has withdrawn these soul-refreshing comforts, which are the consequences or effects of his manifesting himself and his love to the soul of a believer. 3. The spouse is sensible of this distance, and knows, that there are hills and mountains, that is, some things which have a tendency, or at least seem to have a tendency, to obstruct the gracious manifestations of his favourable presence: she is sensible, I say, and knows, that there are such hills and mountains betwixt them. 4. Though it be not expressed what her frame and exercise was, during the time of her beloved's absence, yet it would seem, by what she says here, that she was waiting his return; like a wife that is fond of her husband; when he is away, she is ever looking for his return, and listening to every word she hears, to know whether it be her husband's voice, and ever and anon looking out to see if she can get a sight of him. 5. While she is in this posture, she hears his voice, which makes her, as it were, start up to see him whom she hears. In a surprise she abruptly breaks forth in this exclamation, "The voice of my beloved!" I hear my absent lord speaking to me, sending me some instructions. The promises, the precepts, and all the other parts of the word of God, are Christ's voice to his church, to his people; and when he by his Spirit awakens them to hear and know his voice in his word, then this prepares them for further manifestations of Christ. 6. She being quickened by his voice, turns about, as it were, and intently looks to see him whose voice she heard: the believer once hearing Christ's word, is thereby engaged to desire a sight of him, that is, some more clear and sensible manifestation of him. 7. The spouse obtains her desire, and sees him, by the eye of faith, coming over all the difficulties and discouragements that stand in the way here, compared to hills and mountains, according to the strain of the song.

These few remarks, we conceive sufficient for clearing the meaning of the words; and therefore, I shall not spend any more time upon them. We see not any necessity of an analytical resolution of them into parts, and therefore we shall omit at this time any division of them. In the words, according to the present account we have given of their meaning, we might take notice of several very useful, momentous, and important

truths ; but that we may encroach as little as may be upon your time, we shall reduce all to one comprehensive doctrine, and it is this.

DOCT. "That a sight of Jesus Christ coming for the relief, support, and comfort of his people, over all discouragements and difficulties, which are like hills and mountains in his way, is a very affecting sight to a believing soul, that is sensible of its need of him, and languishing by his absence."

The spouse, in this case, is so affected with the sight, that she starts up, as it were, and cannot hold from crying out even to by-standers to look to him, "The voice of my beloved! Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." The doctrine is a very comprehensive one, and takes in the substance of the verse. This illustration of it will make its truth so convincingly clear, as to supersede any other proof of it.

In speaking upon this subject, we shall inquire,

I. What are these discouragements, these hills, and mountains, which stand in Christ's way, to his own people?

II. What is it, in his coming over these mountains, that is so affecting to them?

III. What are those affections which do arise from this discovery?

IV. Why is this sight so affecting to them?

And then we shall conclude the whole, with some practical improvement.

Now of each of these in order : and we begin ;

I. With the mountains and hills of discouragements, that stand in Christ's way, over which he must come, if he mean to give them any relief, comfort, or support. And,

1. Here there occurs a great difficulty from the infinite and supereminent excellency of the divine nature. This is a mighty mountain : he cannot save from any one evil ; he cannot drop in one drop of strengthening or comforting grace into the soul of any of the lost sons of Adam, unless he step over this huge difficulty. It is admirable, nay, almost inconceivable condescension in the "high and lofty one, that inhabits eternity," to look upon, or, in the least, to regard any, even of his most glorious creatures : for, "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens : and he humbleth himself, to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth," Psal. cxiii. 4, 6. If there cannot be any regard paid to, or a look bestowed upon any thing, even in heaven, unless infinite majesty stoop, as it were ; how shall then man, that is but sprung of earth, has his foundation in the dust, and that is crushed before the moth ; how shall he get a look, I say ? This difficulty, one would think, were great enough, even to nonplus reason, and put it to a stand ; but this is nothing to that which is yet to come. We have scarce yet got a sight of the foot of that mountain that Christ must climb over. If ever he will help, relieve, or comfort any of Adam's posterity, he must not only stoop and look to man, but even to sinful, defiled, rebellious, and apostate man. O stupendous condescension ! Nay, but this is not all ; he must become like one of us. What ! Like one of us ! Must majesty be veiled ? Must glory be lodged in the similitude of man, nay, of sinful man ? This is wonderful indeed ? But it is not all ; this yet will not do : he must not only take upon him the form of man, sinful man ; but even of a poor contemned, reproached, and vilified sinner ! Here, here, O sinners, is a mountain so high, so steep, that if the reason of men and angels had been employed in

taking its height, would have certainly been pronounced insuperable. No wonder that blinded Jews, proud and unbelieving Socinians, be staggered, and question this surprising truth, when even faith itself shakes upon a steady view of this surprising height ; when it sees Christ coming, “ leaping upon this hill, skipping upon this mountain,” then it is mightily affecting to see him come over this wonderful height.

2. A second mountain, over which Christ must come, before he can help any of his people, is that of the wrath of God. In the day that man first rebelled against his Creator, enraged justice did hurl in betwixt him, and any that came to his relief, massy and prodigious mountains of anger and wrath. Had angels or men been by, and had they heard when the glorious plot for the salvation of sinners was first, as it were, proposed in the council of the glorious Trinity : had they, I say, then heard justice assure the glorious undertaker for the salvation of the church, of this difficulty, they would have despaired quite. How would the sinner’s heart ache, to hear justice bespeak him thus ? “ You may, if you will, undertake for sinners ; but if you do, I shall lay upon you such a load of wrath, as will make you weep and groan, and sweat drops of blood ; nay, more, I will fall upon you, and bruise you, till I bruise out your very heart’s blood : mine eye will not pity, my heart shall not spare you : in fine, I shall give you such a load, such a burden of wrath, as shall press your very soul to that degree, as to make you cry out, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” Tell me now, had you heard this dreadful proposal made to the Son of God, would you not have despaired of relief ? Would you not have said, with the desponding church, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. “ our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts ?” and is it not a heart-affecting sight to see the Lord Jesus coming skipping over this hill, and leaping over this terrible mountain ?

3. There was a mountain of opposition in the way of the relief of sinners. Man, in his apostasy from God, took upon his neck the devil’s yoke, became Satan’s vassal, and sold himself a slave to hell ; and therefore, whoever will attempt his rescue must needs lay his account to have hell upon his top. No doubt when the first news of this blessed design was published, it put hell into a terrible commotion ; Satan did think himself secure of his prey, and was triumphing it over the wisdom of God, as if he had spoiled all his contrivance in this lower world, by seducing man ; and no doubt, when he came to understand, that there was a design to rob him of his prey, he would summon together the united force of hell ; and this was a vast mountain in the way. Had we seen what threats, what menaces, and what bloody opposition Christ had to come over in the way he was to go for the relief of his people, we would have concluded, that he would never have undertaken it. This is one of those hills he, to the astonishment of all that do believe, comes skipping over.

4. Another huge mountain in his way was, the unkindnesses of those for whom he was to come. Had they been a people looking and waiting for his command, ready to entertain and welcome him ; this had been something encouraging to him : but quite otherwise was it ; for, among all the sons of men, none more unkind, nay, nor more mad in their opposition to him than they. This was a fainting discouragement ; and who ever could have dreamed, that he should have this mountain thrown in his way ? or, if he had it, who would think that ever he would come over it ? What ! shall we think him so fond, would reason, it may be, say, as to underge not only

his Father's wrath, and lay himself open to the united power, craft, and malice of hell: but moreover, to do all this for persons who will never once deign him an acknowledgement for all his kindness, but repay him with unkindnesses, nay, and hostilities? This is a dreadful mountain!

5. Once more: there is yet another mountain in the way, that Christ must come over, and that is, the unbelief of his people. When they have often seen him skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains, yet unbelief prevails so far upon them, that, at every turn, they question either his faithfulness, his willingness, or power: and is not this a great mountain? The other four, that we mentioned, were great and discouraging; but this we may justly look upon as the greatest. It is said, our Lord wondered at the unbelief of those to whom the gospel came, and that it was such a mountain in his way, that he had most difficulty to get over of any other. We have a remarkable scripture to this purpose, Mark vi. 5, 6. "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them: and he marvelled because of their unbelief." Elsewhere it is expressly said, "That it was because of their unbelief, he did not many mighty works," Mat. xiii. 58.—These are the mountains that faith sees him come skipping and leaping over to its astonishment. We shall now,

II. Inquire, what there is in this sight that is so very affecting to the believer that sees him?

1. There is the glory, the beauty, and transcendent comeliness of his person. Behold he cometh! She says, he, as if every one should know him. There is not a grace, a comely feature, a delicate proportion, that the infinite and unsearchable wisdom of God could invent, wanting in his person. In him is to be seen a majesty that raises itself above the clouds, happily joined to a lowliness that stoops to the very ground.

In him, the glorious and radiant excellencies of the divine nature shine with a brightness exactly adapted to the eye of faith. In him, all that might wound, hurt or overwhelm our frail natures, if seen, is veiled; and all that is useful, that is comfortable, that our natures can bear a sight of in God, is in a most lively manner, discovered to the eye of faith. A sight of a naked God, if I may so speak, with reverence to his name, would have perfectly struck man, sinful man, blind, nay, and dead; for none of Adam's sons can ever see God, out of Christ, and live. A sight of a mere man, though a perfect man, would have given no comfort. These who rob Christ of either of his natures, and offer him for a saviour to sinners, in any one of them, will oblige all who know their need of a Saviour, to groan out their "Ichabod; where is the glory? or, there is no glory." It is the blessed conjunction of the two natures in Christ, that has all the ravishing beauty in it, which attracts the eye, inflames the heart, and raises the admiration of believers. Sinful man could never have believed that God would have any mercy upon him, if he had not seen the divine pity and compassion melting itself down in human tenderness, and sensibly touched with a feeling of our infirmities in our own nature: though he had been sinking in wrath, he would never have assumed the confidence to stretch forth his hand to lay hold upon the divine power, if God had not held it forth to him in a human hand and arm: he would never have dared to approach God for counsel, though he should have wandered eternally, if God had not spoken out of man to him. Never would he have writ after infinite holiness, if it had not been copied out to him in the life of a man. In fine,

it is only that strong and happy union between heaven and earth, God and man, that is in the person of Christ, that gives man any comfort, any strength, or courage in his approaches to God, and a sight of this beauty and glory, in the constitution of the person of Christ, "who is fairer than the sons of men," Psal. xlv. 2. is that which mightily affects the hearts of believers, when they see him coming to them, "leaping upon the hills, and skipping upon the mountains."

2. It is very affecting to see him coming, in that he doth not wait till they seek after him: no; he prevents them, surprises them with his goodness, when it would have well become them to have made the first step towards him, and to have supplicated him for relief: behold, he stands not upon this, but comes "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains." When poor sinful worms, were neither deserving, nor seeking, nor dreaming of relief, and were not so much as looking for him; behold, he comes, for their help: and this is very affecting; for herein is the love of Christ wonderful, in that "he loved us, and gave himself to be a propitiation for us," when we did not love, nay, nor know any thing of him. This, as it is said of the Father, 1 John iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for us;" so it may be, with a like reason, applied to the Son, and accordingly is applied so by himself, in that John xv. 16. Ye, says our Lord to his disciples, "have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." This would have been affecting, if he had allowed us; much more, if he had bid us come to him, choose and cleave to him for relief: but this is infinitely more astonishing, that he himself comes, "skipping over the hills, and leaping upon the mountains," to us.

3. It is very affecting to see from whence, and where he comes. He comes from the bosom of the Father, in which he, from eternity lay, in unspeakable bliss, as the darling of his soul, and object of his eternal delight, who sent that voice to him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," 2 Pet. iii. 17. And he comes down even into the belly of hell, that hell wherein sinners should have lain. He comes from the throne of glory, laying aside the robe of his declarative glory, and "takes upon him the form of a servant," making himself of no reputation, and taking up his lodging, even in a manger among beasts, or among sinful men, worse than beasts. He comes from the company of angels, to converse among men, who dwell in cottages of clay, defiled by sin. This is wonderfully affecting.

4. The sight of the road wherein he comes, is, and cannot choose but be mightily affecting to the believing soul. It is not a road like to that wherein Adam did walk toward heaven, a road that lay through a paradise, that was beautified with pleasant streams, where the ripe apples dropped about his head, and the luscious clusters of the vine did, as it were, crush their wine upon his mouth; where all the fruits, even the first-fruits of the trees of God's planting, not yet made subject to vanity by the sin of man, did reach themselves into his hand; where the harmonious music of the newly created birds did affect his ears with unspeakable delight: where no steep ascents, or dangerous bogs or marshes, made his way unsafe or unpleasant, which lay through the garden, beautified with the most fragrant flowers. The road wherein he comes, is nothing like to this; but is a

most rugged and uneasy way, that lies over huge mountains of enemies, where, on every hand, impending mountains of wrath threaten him with death. In fine, the dreadful tempest of the wrath of God blows all the way full in his face, and carries along with it the stream and stench of all the filthiness, and stinking sores of his friends and foes. What heart would not be affected to see him coming in such a road as this.

5. The design he comes upon, is mightily affecting to them who behold him coming, "leaping upon the hills, and skipping upon the mountains." He comes not, as we might well have expected, to destroy rebellious sinners. "I came not," says he, John xii. 47, "to judge the world, but to save the world. He comes to seek and to save them who were lost," Luke ix. 56. Luke xix. 10. Those he came to save, had nothing amiable in them. What could attract his eye, or love, when they were all, like the wretched infant, lying weltering in their own blood, rolled up in their own filth, ugly, miserable, and deformed creatures, "full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores," filthy as the mire, black as hell, stinking as the grave that is full of rottenness and dead men's bones? And all this was misery purely of their own procuring: "They destroyed themselves," Hos. xiii. 9. and so were the less to be pitied. He came to save them who were not seeking salvation, who were fond of their chains: "They loved darkness rather than light," John iii. 19. He came to follow, with goodness and mercy, "flying sinners." The word that is translated "follow," Psal. xxiii. 6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," signifies to pursue one that is fleeing away; as if David had said, that he was sure God would follow him with goodness, even when he was fleeing from it. In fine, he comes to save them of whom he has no need, who cannot be profitable unto him; "For, can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or, is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Job xxii. 2, 3. "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? Or, if thy transgressions be multiplied against him, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the Son of man," says Elihu, Job xxxv. 6, 7, 8. Now, to see him coming to save such, is wonderfully affecting to the beholders.

6. The swiftness of Christ's coming is very affecting to them; he comes leaping and skipping; he runs so swiftly, that he prevents their ruin, who are swift in running to mischief. The children of God, before the Lord lay hold upon them by his grace, are running to destruction, and the wrath of God is, as it were, in a proportionally swift motion toward them for their destruction; but so swiftly doth Christ come to them, that never one of them is lost. How soon was he at Adam in Paradise? The sin was scarce committed, when lo he is come for the relief of the poor sinner. Indeed, sometimes his mistaken people, when they do not see him, are ready to say with the mother of Sisera, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" But they dote when they speak so; for whenever they see him, they find their mistake, and see him "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains:" for, "behold he cometh quickly."

7. The seasonableness of his coming is very affecting; he comes just in the time when he is needed; and this affects the beholder mightily. This is

evident, not only in the first discovery he makes of himself to believers in their conversion, but in all the after-sights they get of him afterwards, during their abode in this vale of tears. When is it that they first see him coming? It is just when they are ready to sink under the weight of their burden, when they are weary and ready to give over, and succumb under the weight of a load of guilt; and will not the seasonableness of this coming extremely affect such a soul? And the case is perfectly the same in all the after-discoveries he makes of himself. One thing in them that affects, is the seasonableness of the discovery.

8. The cheerfulness of his coming is very affecting; he comes skipping and leaping, he is not dragged to their relief, but he comes very cheerfully, and with great delight. When all that man could do was rejected by God, then he cheerfully undertakes the work of redemption. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo I come: in the volume of thy book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God." He comes cheerfully and with delight over all these mountains: and when a believer sees him thus skipping and leaping, it affects him extremely.

In fine, The strength, the majesty, and triumph of his coming, is very affecting; he comes vigorously, easily, and triumphantly over all interposing mountains, treading down not only the remoter enemies, but the neighbouring and most dangerous enemies of his people. How is the church affected with this, in that 63d chapter of Isaiah, when she sees him coming from Edom, the land of the Edomites, who here are put for all the enemies of the church, and from Bozrah, the principal city of that land, as an evidence of his having entirely ruined them! She looks upon him, and she is wonderfully taken with the majesty and gallantry of his gait, who stepped like a conqueror, fearing no after-assaults from entirely vanquished enemies. "Who is this that cometh from Edom," says the wondering church, "with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength." To which question he answers, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." And then afterwards triumphantly insults over his enemies, as being fully and entirely vanquished. These are the things which the bride is so much affected with, in the coming of her beloved, in the words we have read. I shall now,

III. Proceed to inquire, what are these affections which this sight will move in a believing soul?

1. It will occasion admiration. The spouse here is filled with wonder, and is extraordinarily pressed with it, that she would have others to help her to admire the sight; "Behold, says she, he cometh skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains!" In this sight every thing is apt to beget wonder, every thing is new, surprising, unexpected, and uncommonly excellent.

2. It will excite love. If ever the heart warm to Jesus Christ, this sight will do much to put it into a flame of love. The spouse, when she sees him, is so taken, that she confidently calls him her beloved. "The voice of my beloved! Behold he cometh."

3. It will raise extraordinary joy. See how the church carried it, when he came unexpectedly for their delivery from that captivity, which was a type of their spiritual captivity, Psal. cxxvi. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth

filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them, the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." And such certainly will be the influence of the sight of the glorious deliverer, when he is coming to deliver his people from their spiritual thralldom.

4. It will fill with shame, an ingenuous sort of shame, such as was that of David, upon the Lord's promising to do so many, so great, and undeserved favours and kindnesses to him; 2 Sam. vii. 18. Shame is nothing else but a sort of a displeasency and dissatisfaction with one's self, arising from the discovery of some imperfection, and this is done, when the Lord comes to us; for in him we may see what we are, how vile! how unkind! and how wonderfully kind he is! Enough to put the soul that sees him to the blush. There is a remarkable scripture to this purpose, Ezek. xvi. 63. "And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never more open thy mouth, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." When Christ comes to a soul in peace, it will surely blush for shame.

5. It will occasion grief, an ingenuous sorrow: joy and godly sorrow are not inconsistent: nay, so far is it on the contrary, that here away that joy is not usually abiding, which has not for its companion an ingenuous sorrow; when a believing soul sees Christ, whom it has pierced by its sins, its unbelief, and unkindness, coming "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains," it is ready to dissolve into tears of godly sorrow, which is not like the sorrow of the world, that contracts and narrows the soul; but it enlarges and sweetens the heart, and has in it a joy, which those who are acquainted with it, would not exchange for all the carnal mirth of a wicked world. This grief we are speaking of, is promised expressly as the consequence of this sight, Zech. xii. 18. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn."

6. And lastly, this sight will be attended with gratitude in the soul that sees it. Gratitude is one of the most noble and elevated passions; as much has a man of greatness and ingenuity, as he has of gratitude: if ye pronounce him destitute of this, ye pronounce him void of all that is good. Gratitude is nothing else, but a delightful sense of favours done to any without their desert; and this naturally leads to that question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his gracious benefits to me?" Psal. cxvi. 12. And this much for the third general head. We proceed now,

IV. To inquire into the reasons of the doctrine; whence it is that Christ's coming is so affecting to the soul of a believer. The reasons of this are so plain, that we need scarce insist upon them after what has been said: only in a word; this sight is affecting,

1. Because it is the return of the desire of a believing soul. What is it that the believing soul longs for, and vehemently desires? Is it not to see him come "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains?" Doth not such a one cry out with the spouse, in the 17th verse of this chapter, "Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or young hart upon the mountains of Bether?" And is it possible, that this desire should be accomplished, and the heart not be affected therewith? "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life," says the wise man, Prov. xiii. 12. And a few verses afterward, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul."

2. This flows from the nature of the thing, which is seen; every thing in it, as we have at length made appear, is wonderful and surprising; and therefore apt to affect the beholder.

3. It is on the account of the effects of the discovery: it removes all clouds, it lays a foundation for solid joy, it gives strength to the faint, and comfort to the disconsolate. But passing these, I shall come now to the application.

Use. In the improvement of this doctrine, that I may not encroach too far upon your patience, I shall wave the consideration of many useful doctrinal inferences, which might be drawn from it, and only speak a word to one or two sorts of persons, of whom this assembly may be composed. That I may then make way for the improvement I design, there is a question I shall put to you all; and ye are all not a little concerned in it, especially such of you as design to approach the table of the Lord. The question I pose you on, and which, I plead, ye may pose your own consciences upon, is this:

Did ye ever see this heart-affecting sight, Jesus Christ coming "skipping upon the hills, leaping upon the mountains?" Found ye ever your hearts filled with wonder, love, joy, grief, shame, and gratitude, when ye saw this lovely, wonderful one, Jesus Christ, coming over all interposing difficulties to you? Put the question home to your own consciences: it is a matter of the highest moment and the last importance, especially as to you, who design to approach the table of the Lord. This question, if put home, will, I conceive, cast this assembly into two sorts. 1. Such as never saw Jesus Christ, nor have any desire to see him. 2. Such, who, if they dare not positively say, That they have seen him "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains;" yet dare say, they have seen that, which makes them desire above all things to see this heart-affecting sight. I shall not stand here to subdivide this latter sort, into such who dare be positive in asserting they have seen him, and those who cannot; but shall speak a few words to the two sorts of persons mentioned, without any separate consideration of these inferior divisions that might be made. I begin with the

1. Sort; those who never saw this sight. I put no doubt, there are in this house this day not a few, who have lived, it may be, some twenty, some thirty, some forty, fifty, or threescore years, and have never to this day seen this heart-affecting sight. Ye have been busy toiling for the pleasures or profits of the world; your only inquiries have been about "what ye should eat, what ye should drink, or wherewithal ye should be clothed;" if ye got food to eat, or raiment to put on, or medicine when ye were sick, ye found no want of any other thing; how ye might escape the wrath of God; how ye might be reconciled to him, and get the well-grounded assurance of your peace, its being made with him, never entered into your thought, never brake your rest; ye never missed Christ. If a husband, a wife, a child, a friend, had been absent, or if ye had wanted any external comfort, ye could be sensibly touched and affected with it; but indeed for Christ, ye never had him more than other honest folk your neighbours, nor did ye ever miss him; you came, it may be, to the church, and it may be to communions, ye heard and saw as did others; but for seeing this sight, or hearing any thing that affected you so, as, I have said, a sight of Christ coming for the relief of his people will do; that ye did never see, nor desire. Is not this the exact character of not

a few of this assembly? Sure it is. Well, to any of you who are such, we say,

1. What have we to do with you, who dare not say, that ye come to see Jesus? Our only business here, is to call persons to come and look at this heart-affecting sight; we have no errand here, but to direct people that would see him coming in this glorious manner, and lead them to him, and therefore we have nothing to do with you.

2. What seek ye here? "What seek we here! A very impertinent question," it may be, will some of you say. "We seek the same that other honest folks seek; we never neglected the church; we thank God, our parents taught us, that it is the way to heaven; and we see every body come to it, and we come as they do, to hear a preaching, and to get our communion, as we have ever been in use to do, and as we see others do: and what an impertinent question is this, what seek ye!" Answer, the question is not impertinent, for God has appointed the ends people should propose to themselves in coming, as well as the ordinances to which they should come; and these ends ye have named. Compliance with custom, education, and the like, are not the ends God has appointed the ordinances for: and therefore,

3. It is a small thing for you to mock men, by your assuming the name of Christians, though ye be not acquainted with Christ; but will ye mock our Lord also? Do ye think, that he will suffer you to tread in his courts, as his people, without he understand your errand? or, if he know ye come not to seek himself, will he suffer you to go away without a mark of his displeasure? No; you may assure yourselves he will not suffer such abuses to pass unpunished; the mockers' bands will be made strong. He has said, Lev. x. 3, "That he will be sanctified in all them that come nigh to him, and that he will be glorified before all the people." And if he get himself glory in some remarkable judgment, like to that whereby he was sanctified in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, then woe to you. How terrible will your case be! And, though your stroke be not so noxious to by-standers, and discernible to the eye of sense, as theirs was, yet it may be full as severe. God may lock you up in final impenitency, clap on the chains of judicial hardness upon you, and then woe to you eternally.

4. Have ye been so long at Jerusalem, and never "seen the king's face?" Have ye attended ordinances so long, and never seen Christ coming "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains?" Then certainly ye are blind. I may venture to say, that others in the church with you, in the same assembly, nay, it may be, in the very seat, or at the table with you, have seen this ravishing sight, Jesus Christ "coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, traveling, nay, skipping and leaping, in the greatness of his strength," over interposing hills and mountains. Past all peradventure, then, ye are blind.

5. We say therefore, Take heed; see that ye approach not the Lord's table: for, as the Lord liveth, if ye do, the curse of God will fall upon you: ye will "eat and drink damnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body." Blind folks cannot discern this, and such are ye. Touch not therefore, we charge you, those holy things; for why should ye meddle to your hurt?

6. Saw ye never Jesus? Then ye never saw any sight worth the seeing; ye never saw any thing that could ease you of a burden of guilt which, though ye do not feel the weight of it at present, yet will sink you into hell, if

he take it not off you. Ye never saw any that can go between you and wrath, the wrath of God, that is ready to break forth into a flame against you, and burn you in the lowest hell: ye never saw any that can redeem you out of the hand of the devil, who reigns in the children of disobedience, or subdue those rebellious lusts that war against our souls; in fine, ye never saw any that could save your souls: and, "what is a man profited, if he gain a world, and lose his own soul?" can you carry a world with you into the grave? can a world comfort you in hell? can a world purchase heaven? can a world redeem a soul from chains of massy darkness, with which sinners shall be eternally bound? No; "the soul's redemption is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." All the angel in heaven, all the saints above, all the men on earth, millions of worlds will not, cannot bring a soul, that is once lost, back again.

7. Saw ye never Jesus? Then ye never saw one so infinitely well worth the seeing. What is he, will ye say, whom ye talk so much of? Are ye serious in the question? or, are ye not? If ye be not serious, then it is needless to answer you; if ye be, then, O! that I had the tongue of men and angels, to tell you who he is. O that God would grant me my desire! That he would enlarge a narrow heart, to receive just and great impressions of wonderful Christ! O that he would loose a tacked tongue, and open closed lips! Then should I speak and tell of Jesus Christ; if not what he is, yet what would, in some measure, satisfy the serious inquirer, and make those who were but in jest, to turn in earnest. Ask ye what, and who Jesus is? I tell you, his name is wonderful: "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, the eternal darling of his bosom: he is the son of man, our elder brother," bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh: "He is Immanuel, God with us: God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory:" He is earth carried up to heaven, and heaven brought down to earth: he is that man, who is fellow of the Lord of hosts: he is God in the form of a servant: he is the Amen, and faithful witness, the great prophet, the wonderful counsellor of the church: he is the great shepherd of the sheep: he is the guide of the blind, and the prince of preachers: he is the glorious high-priest of our profession, "the Lord our righteousness," the law fulfilled, the curse of the law, the propitiation for the sins of the world, the Lamb of God, the truth of all the sacrifices, the throne of grace, the true mercy-seat, and the glorious advocate of the church: he is Zion's king, the captain of our salvation, the head of the church, the Saviour of lost sinners, the prince of the kings of the earth, the death of death, the conqueror of the world, the devil, and the flesh, the Redeemer of Satan's slaves, the law giver of the church, the prince exalted to give gifts to rebels, repentance and remission to sinners. What shall I say more of him? "He is the everlasting Father, the mighty God, the Prince of peace, the desire of all nations," the heir of all things, the unspeakable gift of God, the sun of righteousness, the resurrection and the life, the wonder of angels, the terror of devils, the light of the world, the lamp of heaven, in the light of which the nations of them that are saved do walk, and the eternal song of all the redeemed and ransomed of the Lord. This, this is he, O blind sinners, to whom ye have preferred the world, your filthy lusts, and the devil. This is he whom ye expect to come down, to fill this house with his glory, and to entertain his friends at his royal banquet. But, who may

abide his coming? Dare ye, O wretches, do it? Dare ye look him in the face? Once more in the,

8. And last place, we say to you, have ye yet no desires to see him coming, "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains," that are placed between God and you? Then I say to you, we cannot tell, ye cannot tell, but this unseen Christ may lift up his mighty arm, and fetch an unseen blow down upon you, that may ruin you eternally: he may say to you, "Sleep on;" and then, though angels should preach to you, though the threatenings should thunder out wrath to the terror of others, though the land wherein ye live, should shake with the anger of God; nay, though all the shrieks and cries of the damned were about you, ye shall never waken, till the flames of hell awaken you. If ye be awake, and have any desires, then give heed to what we are,

2. To speak to the other sort of persons whom we named. I hope there are some here, who are longing to see Jesus Christ coming, "skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains;" and whether they dare say, that they have seen him formerly in that ravishing posture, or not; yet dare say, that nothing will satisfy them, unless they see this sight; that they have come here for that very end, and have this morning, and it may be, for some days or weeks before, been praying, that here they might see the sight they long for, him, whom though it may be they dare not call their beloved, yet whom they would fain love, skipping over hills and mountains that are between them. And are there any such here? Then our errand is this day to such a very acceptable one; we come this day to call you to see the sight ye so much long for. Up, up; come and see; "behold, he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills!"

1. Poor soul! It may be, thou hast been full of misdoubting thoughts. What! will he, "who is the High and Lofty One, that inhabits eternity," ever let me near him? Me! sinful me! Come and see, O sinner, him whom thou longest for, skipping upon this hill, leaping upon this mountain, cheerfully coming over this difficulty: come to his table, and see, that though Christ "be high, yet he regards the poor and lowly," Psal. cxxxviii. 6. He stoops, indeed, when he receives praises, when he bends his ear to hear thy prayers: but here he is a step lower; he is willing to sit at the same table with you: nay, before you should doubt his kindness, he will step a step lower; he will set you at the table, and he will serve. "Behold him skipping upon the hills, and leaping upon the mountains!"

2. It may be, thou hast been full of fears about the wrath of God. What! will ever he bear one stroke for me! Sinful, unkind, unbelieving me! Oh, no; he never will! Away, away, O sinner, with these proud and misgiving thoughts: "Behold, he comes, leaping upon the hills, skipping upon the mountains!" He has borne the wrath of God; and though it has broken his body, he is nothing discouraged, nothing offended at thee; nor doth he rue his undertaking, but is cheerful after all that is over; and, as a sign of it, has proclaimed a feast for thee, that thou mayest be cheerful at the remembrance of all his sorrow.

3. It may be, thou fearest the enemies that stand in the way, the devil, the world: but let none of these things trouble you: he, who hath trode their strength, and knows it well, stands so little in fear of them, whom he has foiled, that lo, he makes a feast of loves, and covers a table for you in the presence of his foes! Here is a strange evidence of his power: behold

him covering the table, placing the royal entertainment, and holding his enemies, to their infinite discontent, spectators of his matchless kindness to you! Here, here is indeed a heart-affecting sight!

4. It may be, many times thou hast thought in thy heart, I would not doubt but that Christ will come over all, if it were not my wretched unkindness. After I was at his table, and was feasted with royal dainties, I proved wretchedly unkind; I had forgot all he had done for me, and begun to parley and treat with his enemies; and I fear he will never get over this forgotten light, love, and comfort. Whenever I look to him, behold, this looks me broad in the face. Stand not upon this; thou hast reason indeed to be ashamed, but none to be discouraged; for, behold, he comes cheerfully, skipping over all thy unkindnesses, and leaping upon the hills that thou hast raised! Behold, he comes not to upbraid thee with unkindnesses, but to win thee by new favours! Behold, he comes not frowning for faults, but smiling! He comes not to fight against thee, but to feast thee; not to take away mercies thou hast received, but to give thee new ones! He lifts not up his hand to smite unkind friends, but stretcheth them forth with mercies! He speaks to you, but it is not, Depart, unkind friends; but he cries, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey with my honeycomb; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved," Song v. 1. We protest in our kind Lord's name, that if any go away from his table, without being full fed, they are not straitened in him, but in their own bowels: they are not filled; because they have not opened their mouth wide enough.

In fine, Behold, he comes triumphantly over the mountains of unbelief! Are thy sins so strong, so great, that thou findest it hard to believe a bare word, a bare promise, though even of a God that cannot lie? Behold here a wonder of goodness! He will not have thee discouraged for all that. Here he calls to thee, Come and see; nay, taste, and see that Christ is good. Here thou mayest hear him speak; here thou mayest see him bleeding, dying, broken; here thou mayest reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into his side: that wide gash that the sword of justice made, will let thee into his very heart, and there thou mayest see one-half of it full of sorrow and heavy trouble, under the pressure of the hand of justice, and the other full of love and kindness to thee. O! be not then faithless, but believing. Tell me, poor drooping soul, what was it that thou didst see in Christ, when thou sawest him formerly? All that is still to be seen; thou mayest see him pouring out a river of blood, to cleanse such filthy wretches as thou art; thou mayest see him making a feast to strengthen, to comfort poor, weak, drooping souls, and offering all freely. He says not, take my body and my blood, if thou be one that is come to such and such a degree of love, of desire; if thou be one that art free of such and such sins: but, take me, take all, whatever thy sins be, if thou beest but willing.

I cannot stand to answer objections now; only I say, away with fruitless, groundless discouragements. I cannot tell what to say of the naughty, low, narrow, and scanty thoughts many of you have of the grace of Christ. O! says one or other, I am such a body, so vile, so naughty, and fellow-communicants, they are so vile, and so naughty, and, it may be, the ministers, they are such men, have such and such faults; and therefore Christ will not come; he will not get over these mountains. I say, all these may be true: ministers may be faulty, and people too; but, I say, your unbe-

belief is liker to keep Christ away, than any of these things. Away with these narrow thoughts, which depress grace, and discommend Christ. Blessed, eternally blessed be God, that Jesus Christ is not so peevish as many of us, that, for a fault in a minister, or in a fellow-member, will run away. Many faults, many mountains of faults in ministers and people, will not keep him away from any poor soul that is seeking him; and blessed be God, that it is so. Away with these groundless, ignorant, and narrow thoughts. Has Christ come skipping over all real mountains, and will ye rear up imaginary ones? I protest to you, ye are not straitened in Christ, but in your own bowels. "Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the hills, and skipping upon the mountains! And the Spirit, and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. "And he which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus," Rev. xxii. 20.

SERMON V.

CHRIST THE BEAUTY AND SAFETY OF BELIEVERS.

And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud, and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for, upon all the glory shall be a defence. ISA. iv. 5.

THERE are two questions which will be much upon the heart of the man or woman whose eyes God has opened, to see how sin has debased, defiled, and rendered them hateful to the holy God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold sin." 1. How, and where may I obtain such beauty and comeliness as may render me acceptable, and make me capable of the enjoyment of that God, in whose presence only there is fulness of joy, in whose favour life lies, and from whom, if I be separate by sin, I am eternally undone? 2. How may I be secured in the possession of so glorious a privilege, if I be so happy as to attain it? Adam once had it, and lost it; I have less strength, and more opposition, more enemies to grapple with, than he had; and if once I were possessed of such an invaluable prize, all their wit and power would be employed in contriving and taking all ways, using all means to cast me down from my excellency.

Satisfy a convinced sinner in these two, and ye ease him; leave him in the dark as to either of them, and he shall never have any abiding comfort. What peace, what comfort can he have, who either knows not where to have, or how he shall be secured in the possession of, that without which he cannot but be eternally, intolerably miserable? Whoever endeavours to keep him in the dark as to either of these, will be justly looked upon as the irreconcilable enemy of his comfort.

The ever blessed God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, being abundantly willing, that all such as he from eternity had thoughts of peace and love to, should have strong consolation, has been pleased to provide a most satisfying answer to those soul-concerning questions; and this answer lies in this short but comprehensive chapter; that is a summary or abstract of the

whole gospel. In it there is, I may say, a spring of strong consolation for weary souls, that issues from the fountain of God's eternal and unchangeable love to sinners in Christ Jesus, and runs on sweetly, swiftly, smoothly in the channel of a covenant that is everlasting, well ordered in all things, and sure; carrying alongst with it, forcibly, all those sinners that do once taste of its refreshing stream, till it land them fairly in the embraces of eternal and unchangeable love, whence it took its rise.

Who art thou, O convinced sinner, that wouldst fain be satisfied as to the first question, and desirest, above all things, to know how thou mayest have the damage, that thou hast sustained by sin, repaired, and wouldst have thy soul made meet for the enjoyment of God, in whose favour is life, at whose right hand are rivers of eternal pleasure, and fulness of joy, to such as are accepted of him. Here thou hast a satisfying answer, in the 2d verse of this chapter; "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth excellent and comely;" or rather, "beauty and glory, excellency and comeliness to the escaped of Israel." We had occasion yesterday, as some of you may, it is like, know, to discourse this head; and in the opening up of the words, we did by many, and I hope convincing arguments, prove these three things, which we shall name, because they will lead us into the meaning of our text. 1. We did prove, that this, and consequently all the promises of this chapter, are made to believers, the godly remnant of the visible church, who, for different reasons, are called by diverse names in this chapter; "The remnant, the escaped, them that are left of Israel, the daughter, the dwellers in Zion, (dwelling-places being put for dwellers) and they whose names are written in Jerusalem." The reasons of these various denominations we then gave, but shall not repeat. 2. We did evince, that by the "branch of the Lord, the fruit of the earth," which is promised to them, "for beauty and glory, excellency and comeliness," is to be understood our Lord Jesus Christ, the man whose name is the branch, who builds the temple of God, the gospel church, and takes the glory; the righteous branch, that grows out of the stem of Jesse, whose name is to all them that believe on him, "The Lord our righteousness," in whom their glory and their salvation is placed. 3. We did make it appear, that by this beauty and glory, this excellency and comeliness, is principally, if not only, to be understood that spiritual glory which our Lord Jesus imparts to all believers in the begun renovation of their natures here, and their complete sanctification hereafter, and in the imputation of his untainted righteousness to them, whereby they are made beautiful and glorious, through his beauty and glory that is put upon them. The king's daughter thus is not only made all glorious within, but clothed in garments of wrought gold.

After this account given of the meaning of the words, we did propose, and at length discourse this important truth from them, "That it is the eminent and high privilege of believers, that the Lord Jesus Christ is their beauty and glory." In the application of which, we took occasion to press sinners to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest in him for beauty and glory, for comeliness and excellency, who is promised and tendered for that end in the gospel; and this has been once and again pressed upon you all at this occasion.

Now all of you, especially such as have approached the Lord's table, have solemnly professed your putting on, and resting in the Lord Jesus Christ, for beauty and glory, excellency and comeliness; whether ye have

been sincere or not, God knows. Some, I hope, have been so ; and such will be deeply concerned for a satisfying answer to the second question above-mentioned, viz. How shall they be secured in the possession of that glory and beauty that they have got ? The efforts and violent assaults of sin, Satan, and the world, perhaps, since they were at the table, to despoil and rob them of all, have filled their hearts with fear, and suggested melancholy apprehensions to them, of the issue of what concerns them. It may be, some such soul this morning has been secretly whispering, and saying within itself, with sadness of heart :

“ The day was, and perhaps yesterday was that day, when I thought I had put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and did rest in him for beauty and glory. I thought I found him come into my heart, and draw there all the traces and lineaments of the new creature ; that I found the scripture mentioned verified. I felt a new and heavenly life acting itself in outgoings of heart, in love, in desire, in joy, and delight toward God, Christ, the law of God, and heavenly things : I thought I was all glorious within : the glorious hope cheered me, and these glorious influences of strength I felt, animated, quickened, and enabled me for duties ; and I then ran and did not weary. I thought I had on the robe of Christ’s glorious righteousness, and felt the advantages of it, in my approaches to God. I stood before God, his law, and my own conscience, and I was not ashamed as formerly ; but had a holy boldness, in dealing with God, mixed with love to, and just reverential impressions of him. Thus it has been with me : but now, alas ! I am as much frightened with fears that I may lose all this beauty and glory, as once I was, that I should not get it. Sin within, Satan, and the world without, have united their craft and power on design to cast me down from my glory and excellency, to defile me, and turn me out of these glorious robes I once thought I had got on. I find enemies so strong, so stirring, active, and powerful, and my own strength so small, that I am even tempted to believe, that they shall be successful, and that I shall be cast out of God’s sight, as an unclean thing.”

Such as are acquainted with the many temptations with which the children of God are frequently exercised in this house of their pilgrimage, will think this no strange language : now, if there be any such here thus concerned, putting this second question, how shall I keep the possession of the beauty and glory I have got ? Then the answer lies in the words of my text, “ Thus saith the Lord to such, I will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night : for upon all the Glory shall be a defence, and there shall be a tabernacle for the shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.”

I shall not detain you long in the explication of the words. A very little added to what has been said, will make way for the truth we design to insist upon, and clear the scope and intendment of the Spirit of God in them. It is the latter part only of the 5th verse we design to insist upon, though in our progress we may readily explain both the verses, the substance of which is summed up in that promise in the close of the 5th ; “ And upon all the glory there shall be a defence,” or a covering, as the word may be rendered, and accordingly is in the margin of our Bibles.

The words are a gospel promise expressed in law terms, or a new testament mercy in old testament clothes, as a great man, now in glory, hap-

pily expresses it, commenting upon the place. The Lord, in the preceding part of the chapter, promises to believers, Christ for beauty and glory, and here he promises to maintain them in the possession of it, by creating a defence over, or upon it. And this is expressed in allusion to the cloud and pillar of fire which stood over the ark and mercy-seat, and was a defence upon them, protection unto them.

The ark, which was a type of Jesus Christ, is called the glory of Israel, according to the flesh, who were also a type of the true Israel of God, the church of believers. Hence it was, that the dying wife of Phineas groaned out her Ichabod, where is the glory? Or, there is no glory, the glory was departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken: and God is said to “deliver his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies’ hand.” Psal. lxxviii. 61. When Israel was travelling into Canaan through the wilderness, God did cover and defend their glory with a cloud: there was always upon the ark, which was the glory of that people, the cloud of the Lord’s protection.

On the other hand, Jesus Christ is the beauty and glory of the spiritual Israel, as he is made beauty and glory, excellency and comeliness to them; and for their encouragement, the Lord promises the cloud of his protection, and that they shall be maintained in possession of this glory by this covering, or defence, which he will place over and above it, as if the Lord had said, “Let not the remnant, the escaped of Israel, poor believers, droop for fear, lest any deprive them of that spiritual beauty and glory which I have promised unto them in Christ; for I will maintain it, the covering of my protection shall be over it.” This seems to be the plain meaning of the words; and this account of them may receive further light afterwards from what we design, if the Lord will, to speak of the nature and properties of this defence.

From the words thus explained, we observe,

DOCT. “That there is a covering or defence stretched over all that glory which believers have in and from the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby they are maintained in the possession of it.”

There needs no proof of the doctrine, it being the words, with a very little variation: and what may be adduced in the explication of this truth, will set it in a clear enough light. In the doctrine thus proposed, there are evidently two things implied. First, There may be attempts to rob them, and turn them out of this glory; otherwise there were no need of a defence, a covering to protect them in the possession of it. Secondly, That they are not themselves able to maintain their own ground, to maintain their own lot; for if they were, then they should have no need of this covering, this defence to be stretched out over all the glory.

In the further prosecution of this doctrine, I shall, as briefly as may be, inquire,

I. What this glory is, which believers have in and from the branch of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Who are the enemies, by whom this glory is attempted and endangered?

III. We shall show what this covering, this defence is, whereby this glory is maintained.

IV. We shall name, and shortly discourse of some properties of this defence.

The proof and reasons of the doctrine will easily be deduced from these

things, which we shall shortly discourse of in order, as now proposed ; and then come to the application.

1. In order, viz. An inquiry into that glory which believers have in and from Jesus Christ. We shall not here repeat any thing we had occasion to discourse upon this head, from the second verse of this chapter : there we did, in general, open the nature of this beauty and glory, and did show that the branch of the Lord is outward, and inward, begun and completed glory to all believers. These things we shall not resume ; but now I shall enter, as it were, upon a detail of the several parts of this glory, which then I did only speak of in gross, without descending to particulars, which now we shall only insist upon : And,

1. Believers have, in Christ Jesus, a glorious life : life makes the things that are possessed of it, to excel in glory those that are dead ; and this is the peculiar, the distinguishing glory of believers, that they are “ alive from the dead,” while the generality of the world is “ dead in trespasses and sins.” This is their glory, and this they have in Christ, who is their life. Col. iii. 4. “ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” “ He is the life,” John xiv. 6. And communicates life to whom he will, and maintains it where once it is given ; for he hath said to all such, that, “ because he lives, they shall live also,” John xiv. 19. His life is the cause of the continuation of their life ; and fail it cannot, unless his fail first.

2. In him they have a glorious light : he is the “ true light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world,” John i. 9. And “ he shines into their minds, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6. Hence it is, that we find that glorious promise made to believers in this gospel day as is thought by many, Isa. lx. 19. “ The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.” And answerable hereto is Christ’s account of himself, John viii. 12. “ I am the light of world ; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Believers, by their first acquaintance with him, are translated from darkness into his marvellous light, in which they see light.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ is to believers the glory of their strength ; he is expressly asserted to be so, Psal. lxxxix. 16, 17. “ In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted ; for thou art the glory of their strength.” Believers have indeed a glorious strength ; as weak as, many times, they are in their own eyes, and in the eyes of the world, they have a sort of omnipotency : “ I can do all things,” (saith the Apostle, and so may every believer say,) “ through Christ that strengtheneth me,” Phil. iv. 13. Faith, like a grain of mustard seed, that is in the least degree, saith our Lord, “ can remove mountains ;” and may I not say, that, in the least degree, it doth greater things than the removal of mountains ; it pierces heaven, surveys the invisible things of God, lifts a burden of sins heavier than a world, and rolls it over upon Christ ; it holds the hands of God, as if it were stronger than omnipotency. “ Let me go,” says the angel of the covenant to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26. and “ Let me alone,” says God to Moses, Exod. xxxii. 10. “ That my wrath may wax hot against them, and consume them.” Is not this glorious strength ? And all this glory is owing only to Christ.

4. In him have they glorious righteousness ; for his name is to them, “ The Lord their righteousness,” Jer. xxiii. 6. “ In him have they

righteousness and strength; and in him therefore shall they be justified, and glory," Isa. xlv. 24, 25. They are clothed without and within with a glorious robe, or rather with two glorious robes of righteousness, the one inherent, the other imputed; and he is both to them; from him have they both: for "he is made of God to them, righteousness and sanctification; that he that glorieth, may glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. "The king's daughter is all glorious within, and is clothed in robes of wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 13.

5. The branch of the Lord is the hope of glory to believers: that "hope that makes not ashamed," that is the great comfort and refreshing cordial whereon believers feed, here, in the house of their pilgrimage; it is a fruit that grows only upon the branch of the Lord. To believers God makes known "what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in them the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. Once more,

6. In him they have a title to a glorious inheritance, crown, throne, and kingdom, even that inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away; that crown of glory that is laid up by the righteous judge for all believers; that throne of glory, whereon all the overcomers are set, and kingdom that is never to be abolished. In him have they a title to all these: for "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. Whereby they likewise are made sharers of the glorious liberty of sons, and heirs of glory: for "if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus," the Lord of glory, Rom. viii. 17. Time would fail me to discourse of almost innumerable other parts of this glory, which they have from Christ. Proceed we now,

II. To inquire, who may be the enemies that attempt upon this glory, and endeavour to rob them of it. It were strange indeed, if believers were allowed the peaceable possession of all this glory in an envious world; and therefore it is not to be wondered at, that they have enemies. Now, among these, the first that deserves to be named is Satan, who may, in a way of eminency, be called the adversary of the children of God: he leads the van, upon all occasions, against them, and particularly in this matter; he envies them the glory, beauty, the excellency and comeliness which they have by Jesus Christ: and his enmity acts itself, among others, these two ways, 1. When a poor soul begins to weary of its filthy garments, in which, Joshua-like, it is naturally clothed, and would fain cast them off, then he stands at their right hand, as he did at the right hand of Joshua the high priest, to resist them: Zech. iii. 1. When they would pull off the filthy garments, in order to put on Christ, then he endeavours to hold them on; and no wonder he should do so; for they are the badges of his slavery, the clothing of his vassals, who is the God of this world. 2. When they have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, then he tempts them, and endeavours to persuade them, either by fair or foul means, by force or cunning, to throw him off again. Pharaoh-like, he endeavours to keep them in his vassalage and slavery; and when they escape, then he pursues them into the wilderness with his horses and chariots, all his temptations: and he says, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied," Exod. xv. 9. In a word, I will turn them out of their glory. How confident was he of this, in the case of Job? But yet he got not him induced, nor forced to throw it away: his sincerity, his regard to his

Redeemer, his hope of seeing him, at the latter day, stand the last man upon the earth, he still retained.

2. The next enemy that endeavours to rob the remnant of Israel of their beauty and glory is the world, that ever goes hand in hand with Satan, the God of this world. And two ways doth the world endeavour to rob or cheat believers out of that beauty and glory which they have in Christ Jesus.

1. It endeavours to rub contempt upon this beauty and glory : the world calls Christ, and all his purchase, Iehabod, there is no glory. When they see him, they say, "There is no form nor comeliness in him why he should be desired," Isa. liii. 2. And therefore he can give no glory to others : and they endeavour to possess believers of this horrible mistake. And then, 2. The world shows the believer all its own rival glory, and commends it to him, persuading him to barter away Christ for these things. But the,

3. And last, and, I may add, the worst enemy of all, is still behind ; and that is the old man, sin in the heart. This is an enemy within doors, and endangers all the glory, more than any thing else. The church in the wilderness was liker to be deprived of the ark, the symbol of God's presence, by murmuring sinners within itself, than by all the attempts of Pharaoh, or other enemies. Delilah had never robbed Samson of that glorious strength he had, if this enemy had not betrayed him : and indwelling sin strives to turn out believers out of their glory, 1. In general by moving and acting all its lusts, in order to extinguish the very life and being of grace within ; and this would divest the believer of inherent righteousness, were the attempt successful. 2. In particular, by the stirrings and actings of unbelief ; it endeavours to turn the soul out of its imputed glory, well knowing that this glory is fastened to the soul only by faith. Now these are the enemies which attempt upon the glory of believers, and would spoil them, no doubt, of it, were it not that there is a defence, a covering, or rather many coverings stretched out over it : and this leads me to that which we did propose to be discoursed of in the,

III. Place, viz. what this defence is. If we shall believe some, who call themselves believers, how justly God knows, and one day all Israel shall know, they will tell us, there is no other covering stretched over all this glory ; but that thin and airy one of man's own endeavours, founded upon that idol, free-will, its right determination : but were they in the right, then we should have much ado to believe God wise, and to act like himself. I believe all the wisdom of man should find it a hard task to know what wisdom there is in covering the type, I mean the material ark, with no less than five coverings, the tabernacle itself, the covering of goat's hair, that of ram skins dyed red, that of badger skins, and, over all the rest, the cloud ; while, in the meantime, the real glory of the church, and of every particular believer, has no covering over it, but that which is worse than none. If it were so, we should be at a loss to know the foundation of that strong consolation, which God is abundantly willing, that all the heirs of salvation should have : if it stand upon no stronger bottom than this, we, and all believers, who know, from sad experience, that there is nothing more weak than our own endeavours, nothing more strong, (this defence, which God is, and promises excepted) than sin, Satan, and the world, must of necessity, with the wife of Phineas, give up the ghost, and, with our dying breath, cry, Iehabod, "the glory is departed from Israel." We may all, upon good grounds, then say, "Our bones are dried, our strength and hope is lost, and perished from the Lord ; and, for our part, we are

cut off." But, eternally blessed be God, things are better ordered ; " the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man : " and therefore, " let God be wise, and every man a fool ; let God be true, and every man a liar." We must give these men the lie, lest we should be obliged to serve God so in their defence ; we must give them the trouble of refusing their wild and extravagant fancy, lest by receiving it, we should make sad the hearts of those whom God has not made sad. Leaving then this vain and airy covering, I shall show you, O poor distressed souls, whose hearts are trembling, lest ye lose the glory ye have got, a fivefold covering or defence, that is stretched over all your glory, for its protection, as far beyond that fivefold covering formerly mentioned, as Jesus Christ himself was beyond the ark, that was a type of him. And,

I. Over all your glory there is the defence, the covering of the Spirit of Christ, which is given to every one of his, to every believer : for, " if any one have not the Spirit of the Lord Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Believers are all the temple of the Holy Ghost, and it is dwelling in them, that is the covering of all their glory and, secures them in the possession of the branch of the Lord, for beauty and glory. Believers cannot lose any part of their beauty, of their glory, because the Spirit of God is in them, which infallibly covers two of the fundamental parts of their beauty and glory, spiritual life, and the robe of Christ's righteousness. Where the Spirit is, he quickens, he cherishes, keeps alive, and warms that spark of life which, at his entry, he wrought in the soul. Indeed, sometimes the spiritual life of the children of God, which is no small part, as we showed before, of the beauty and glory which they have from Christ Jesus, may retire into the soul, like the life of a tree, in the winter, that discovers not itself in blossoms, buds and pleasant fruits. When believers who are beautiful and glorious, by Christ's beauty and glory put upon them, do travel abroad in the winter of temptation, desertion, and spiritual decays, it may fare with them as it does with beauties that travel abroad in nipping frosts, they are blackened for a little time, but presently, when the storm is over, and they get any warmth, their beauty returns to them, and they look fresh, their former glory is retrieved and turns fresh in them ; for it was not lost, but disguised a little. It was not paint and varnish, which if once washed off would not come on again ; but it is the natural form of the face, and therefore, as long as life is within, there is hope ; nay, it is certain, that it shall return again. Just so is it with believers, though sometimes they may, as to external appearance, and as to external fruits of the Spirit in a gospel-adorning walk, be blackened by the winter of temptation, desertion, and spiritual decays, yet they will retrieve their former lustre ; for, " the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelling in them, will quicken their mortal bodies," and renew their glory, Rom. viii. 11. And if he quicken their bodies at the resurrection, and by his presence, or dwelling in them, secure to them their resurrection to glory ; much more doth he thereby assure them of the preservation of the life of their spirits by his presence. Again, the Spirit by his dwelling in them, keeps faith in life ; for faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit, which he produces wherever he is, Gal. v. 22. " The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." As long as the Spirit is in the soul, faith will be there, at least in the root, and then all is secure ; the glory may not appear, but it is in no danger of being lost while faith lives, for this is the hand that holds Christ and all his beauty and glory, it puts him,

and keeps him on, and as long as it subsists, Christ must be with them, and consequently all his beauty and glory. This is the faith, and this is the patience of all the saints of God, and this is the defence, the covering that is upon all the glory; such as think to cover themselves with their own endeavours, "They take counsel, but not of God; and they cover themselves with a covering, not of his Spirit, a covering that is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it." But here is a glorious covering, made up of such wonderful pieces, and so strongly linked together, that it can never fail. That I may at once shame the saints out of their groundless fears, and the bold enemies of their perseverance out of their intolerable boasts. I will show you this covering in all its parts, and in its glorious contexture, in the following assertions. 1. To him that believes, Christ is beauty and glory, this is the promise, Isa. iv. 2. 2. To whom Christ is glory, the Spirit of Christ is certainly given: "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. viii. 9. 3. Where the Spirit of Christ is, there is faith: none dare deny this that will own the Bible. 4. None can lose Christ, unless they lose faith first; for faith is the hand that grips him. 5. None can lose faith, unless the Spirit go first away; for where it is, faith will be; for it is the fruit of the Spirit. 6. The Spirit of Christ will never leave the soul for any other thing, but the want of faith. This is the covering, and a glorious one it is, that is stretched over all the glory of the children of God. This is the foundation of God that stands sure, and we boldly bid the devil and all the enemies of the saints' comfort, and I may add, of God's glory, a defiance; let them find a crack in this foundation if they can. But,

2. The covering of God's providence is stretched over all this glory for a defence to it. Providence is nothing else but the performance of the eternal decrees of heaven, one of which it is, we know that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Rom. viii. 28. That same Spirit that is in Christ and is in believers, moves all the wheels of it, so that they shall never turn but towards the saints' good. And what good, I pray, can they have, if their glory, be not secured, which is all their comfort in time, and to eternity? Surely there can be none; and therefore "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth to show himself strong in behalf of his people." The several ways whereby this doth protect believers, and defend their beauty and glory, I cannot now stand to insist upon; only in a word, I say, the saints have found it like the cloud in the wilderness, to which the Spirit of God alludes in the text, when the saints have not known when to move, or when to rest, it has directed them: when they have not known which way to steer their course, it has, like the guiding cloud, gone before them, when spiritual enemies have been pursuing them, it has got in betwixt them and the enemy; when in the night of temptation, or desertion, they have been in the dark, it has been "a pillar of fire to give them light;" when they have been in the wilderness, it has preserved to them the ordinances, for their refreshment and the maintenance of their glory: many, if not all of these it was to David, in his wilderness condition, and not a few of them are exemplified in that one providence recorded, 1 Sam. xxv. of Abigail's coming forth to meet him. Many of them, nay all of them, have been exemplified in the experience of many a poor believer in the church of Scotland, when some years ago she was in the wilderness.

3. Over all the glory of believers there is the covering, the defence of

Christ's intercession; Christ in his life did weave for believers, if I may so speak, that glorious robe of his righteousness which is imputed to them, and by his death he purchased for them sanctification, and all its consequential advantages; for "he loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be perfectly beautiful and without blemish," Eph. v. 26, 27. Here are two things Christ, by his death, has purchased for his church. 1. Sanctification, which takes in faith as a principal part of it, and the Spirit, as the cause of it. 2. The preservation and consummation of this privilege, in the presentation of the church at the last day, full of beauty and glory: and now, Christ, by his intercession, takes care for the application of this purchase, "He is able therefore to save to the uttermost all them that come to God through him, since he ever lives to make intercession for them;" Heb. vii. 25. And what it is he seeks in their behalf, if we turn to that 17th of John, which is the preface of Christ's intercession, and a declaration on earth, of that which Christ doth for ever in heaven, we shall see. There, he prays not only for those who were his disciples, "but for all that should believe on him" to the end of the world, ver. 20. That they may be kept and preserved in the enjoyment of their glory. "Holy Father," saith he, "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are," *i. e.* keep them from sin, and ruin, every thing that will keep them from union with me. Compare 1 John ii. 1, 2. This he prays for, ver. 11, and again in the 15th ver. of this same chapter, "I pray not," saith he, "that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." And surely there is nothing evil, if that be not so to lose Christ, which is indeed to lose all that is good. Here is a noble covering, a noble defence over all the glory of the children of God; and upon this the Apostle grounds that triumphant defiance he bids to all that should attempt to separate Christ and believers, in that 8th chapter to the Romans, from the 33d verse to the close of the chapter. But passing this,

4. Upon all the glory of believers there is that covering, the defence of the everlasting covenant, that is ordered in all things and sure. There are two covenants, that of grace, made with believers in Christ, and that of redemption, made with Christ himself, which is the foundation of the other; and these two make a strong covering and defence for that beauty and glory, which believers have from Christ: we have a summary of the covenant of redemption, in as far as we are concerned in it, Psal. lxxxix. 28. and onwards, there God engages thus, "His seed will I make to endure for ever, and if his children forsake my law, break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, my covenant will I not break; but his seed shall endure for ever." The like account we have of the covenant of grace, Jer. xxxii. 38, and downwards. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God, and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." To which add what is in the parallel Chap. xxxi. 34. "I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins

no more. Here indeed is a glorious covering stretched out over all the glory. Who will rob believers of that which is so well secured to them by that everlasting covenant of grace founded upon that eternal, and no less sure covenant of redemption? Now, that ye may know how sure it is made by this covenant, that they who were upon God's heart from eternity, shall have Christ; how sure they, who have him once, are made, that they shall not lose him, him who is their glory. I shall give you a few remarks from this account of the covenant. And, 1. Hereby the Spirit is promised, not to abide for a while, but for ever, John xiv. 16. "I will," saith Christ, "pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." To which that other promise is parallel. Isa. lix. 21. 2. That faith, which, as was said before, puts on Christ, is promised in its root; a new heart, one heart, in its fruit; one way, in its "continuance, that they fear me for ever, for their good." 3. All that can be supposed needful, in order to maintain faith, is here promised. "I will make an everlasting covenant, says God, that I will not turn away from them to do them good." 4. This covenant engages, that the guilt of sin shall not stand in the way of their mercy. God sees, that there may and will be sin, but he promises, that this shall not hinder the communication of grace, or its continuance; "I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more." See John ii. 1, 2. 5. When they turn aside, there are reclaiming means promised; "I will visit their iniquities with the rod, and their sins with chastisement or stripes." 6. To conclude all, the end is secured; "I will not turn away from thee to do thee good, I will not take my loving-kindness utterly from them;" they shall endure for ever, and fear me for ever. Here is a covering sufficient for ever to banish all fears from poor distressed believers, and to give them strong consolation in the greatest strait. Dying David found it so, and all, who try it, will find the same.

5. Upon all the glory there is the covering, the defence of the everlasting and unchangeable love and purpose of the eternal God. All the rest are wrapped up here, as it were. This takes in under it all the former. Jer. xxxi. 3. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; and therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. I will be with thee, I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." A promise, which, though made in particular to Joshua, Josh. i. 5, yet is extended to all, Heb. xiii. 5. The promises are the transcripts of the eternal decrees of heaven, which are a sure covering and defence to that which they engage for, since they engage omnipotent power, infinite wisdom, and unchangeable faithfulness for their performance. Who sees not now, that all the glory has a glorious defence? Pluck up your spirits, ye blessed souls, who have believed in Christ, there is no fear of losing him; for, upon all the glory there is a defence; and that such a one, as we have named, consisting of the five coverings mentioned, the Spirit of God, the providence of God, the intercession of Christ, the everlasting covenant, and irreversible decrees of heaven. It only remains that we discourse,

IV. Of some properties of this defence, and we shall but name a few of them, and these such as are taken from the words.

1. This is a defence of God's creating. "I will create," says God, "a cloud upon all the dwelling-places of Jerusalem." He leaves not man to defend himself, or his glory, which he has given him; but he promises to undertake the work himself, and to create a defence upon all the glory.

and accordingly, as we have heard, he sends the Spirit, makes Christ an intercessor, for maintaining it; engages his providence, makes an everlasting covenant, and interposes eternal and unchangeable purposes of love for that effect. It is not framed by the hands or will of man, but it is made, it is created by the omnipotent and eternal God.

2. It is a sure defence, that depends not upon the mutable will of man, changeling man, but upon the eternal and immutable will and purpose of him, who is God, and changes not, who hath said, "My counsel, that shall stand, and I will perform all my pleasure." His purpose and performance ever go together, and so we see it in the text: "I will create a cloud," so runs the beginning of the verse; and "there shall be a defence." There is the performance in the close of it. Once more,

3. It is an extensive covering and defence; it is not like the coverings of men's making, that are narrower than that a man can wrap himself in them. Now its extent is four-fold in the text. 1. It reaches every particular believer, and secures him: "I will create," saith the Lord, "upon every dwelling-place in mount Zion," that is, upon every one that dwells in the church, I mean, every true member of it, "a cloud and a defence for preserving their glory." 2. It reaches all believers in their church-state, and secures to them, as they are a collective body, protection, in the enjoyment of all the ordinances of God, necessary to their being and salvation; so runs the promise, "and I will create upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." 3. It extends to all the glory; it is not some particular parts of it that are defended by this covering, and others left bare: upon all the glory, the root, and the branches, there shall be a defence. 4. It extends to all the different ways wherein this glory can be attempted or attacked. It is not such a defence as will secure against one enemy, and lay you open to another; but let your enemies come upon you behind or before, in the night or the day, by the heat of persecution, or by a storm of temptations; this defence will protect you; for, it is "a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; it is a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." And thus much for the doctrinal part. The application remains.

We might draw a great many doctrinal inferences from this; but these we must, of necessity, wave, time not allowing us to mention them: nor will the time prefixed to this discourse suffer us to apply it practically at that length we designed: and therefore I shall only, in a word, speak of three sorts of persons, unbelievers, who have never yet put on the Lord Jesus Christ, for beauty and glory; believers, who have put on the Lord for beauty and glory, and who can own so much, to the commendation of God's rich grace. And lastly, disconsolate believers, who are walking with backs bowed down. It is the last sort we principally intend; we shall speak more shortly to the other two.

We begin with the First. I fear, there are in this house not a few, and even such as have been at the Lord's table, who to this day never saw their own vileness and defilement, who are clean in their own eyes, though they be not washed from their filthiness: and therefore, did never seek to the Lord Jesus Christ, nor rest in him for beauty and glory. To such we have not much to say; only,

1. We say to you, what have ye to do here? What had ye to do here yesterday? None should tread the courts of our Lord, either upon one

occasion or other, but such as either seek him for beauty and glory, or have already accepted of him; and, I fear, ye are of neither sort, who are yet unbelievers, after all that ye have heard and seen at this occasion, or others of the like sort.

2. If any of you have been at this feast, who have not put on the Lord Jesus Christ for beauty and glory; then I say to you, ye have been at the feast without a wedding garment: and therefore read your dreadful doom, Matt. xxii. 13. You know not but the word may be gone out already, "Bind yonder wretches hand and foot and take them away, and cast them into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And if you continue in that state, sure the execution will suddenly follow.

3. Therefore while it is called to day, haste, escape from Satan's slavery, throw away your own filthy raiment, and come, put on the Lord Jesus Christ for beauty and glory; and in that day, wherein ye comply with this exhortation, the branch of the Lord shall be to you for beauty and glory, "and upon all the glory shall be a defence:" neither former sins, nor any afterwards ye may fall in, shall rob you of this glory.

4. If ye will still glory in that which is your shame, then, Isa. xxx. 1. &c. "Woe to you, saith the Lord God, O ye rebellious children, that take counsel, but not of me; that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that ye may add sin to sin:—ye shall be ashamed of these things whereon ye trust: this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant." No covering can protect you from the vengeance of God, but that of which we have been speaking; and ye have no lot, no portion in that, so long as ye have not fled to, and put on and acquiesced in the Lord Jesus, for glory and beauty, excellency, and comeliness.

As for the *Second* sort of persons, such as have accepted of the Lord Jesus Christ, for beauty and glory, and have been at his table, feasting with him, who is all your glory and salvation, in sign and token of your thankful remembrance of that death that purchased you all this beauty and glory, and is one of the coverings that are stretched out over it, for its defence. To you I say,

1. Hail people greatly favoured of God! Blessed are ye of the Lord; all generations shall call you so. The lines are fallen happily in pleasant places, and the inheritance ye have got excels; God is your portion, and he maintains your lot; ye have glory, a defended, covered glory: and what can ye want more!

2. Fear not what man, nay, what sin or hell can do unto you; let not the threats of sin, Satan, and the world, sink you into despondency and discouragement. Should such men as you fear? And who, being in your state would fear? Are ye not in a strong tower? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run thither, and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. Is it not a tower seated upon an impregnable rock? "Your place of defence is the munition of rocks," Isa. xxxiii. 16. Again, are ye not within that city, which has salvation for its walls and bulwarks? And, to complete all, is not the glorious Lord to you a place of broad rivers, wherein no gallant ship nor galley with oars can pass? Fear not then, with a fear of despondency, your enemies' threats; they may fight against you, but they shall not prevail.

3. Improve this defence, keep always yourselves under this covering. Though this defence makes it sure, that ye shall not lose your glory, yet it

defends you not against the fears of losing it, which may make you uneasy enough, and render your lives uncomfortable. It is only a vigorous improvement of this defence, that can secure you in the comfort of your interest in it.

4. Though God has made a defence over all the glory, he has not said, that ye shall not meet with enemies, who will make attempts upon your glory; nay, thereby he has given sufficient intimation, that storms ye must meet with; and therefore prepare for storms, and for opposition: and if ye be not upon your guard, you may suffer loss, and that great loss. Though the enemies cannot break down the walls of salvation, and kill you, yet, if ye look unwarily out over them, some one enemy or other may throw a dart at you, which, though it kill not, may leave blue marks. Though sin cannot dispossess the Spirit entirely, yet it may grieve him; and if ye grieve him, he will grieve you. Though sin cause you not lose the safety, yet it may cause you lose the comfort of the covenant: and therefore look to it, prepare for trials, for assaults; your enemies will be on you.

5. Do not sin, because ye are safe. This is what enemies say against this doctrine, that it opens a door to, and makes way for licentiousness; but I am sure it doth not so: for if any will draw any encouragement to sin hence, it must be framed thus, I will sin, because grace abounds, which the apostle rejects as an ill consequence, with detestation, "shall we then sin, because grace abounds? God forbid," Rom. vi. 1. Such as allege, that this doctrine favours sin, they suppose two things, 1. That believers are not created in Christ Jesus to good works, are not endued with a new nature, which leads them to delight in the ways of God. 2. That the only thing that makes them fear sin, and flee it, is the fear of hell. And I may add a third, That the believer is one, below the very beasts, which have something like gratitude; they will not readily injure such as feed them. Take away these three monstrous suppositions, and let us see what sort of an argument they will get from this doctrine, to induce a believer to live in sin. They suppose him to reason thus, this is a pleasant doctrine, that tells me, I am safe; I shall not fall from an interest in Christ: well then, I will take my fill of sin. Now, thus framed, it is full of nonsense and contradiction, and no other way can they frame it; no otherwise do the greatest pretenders to reason amongst them frame it. And now I will let you see what sort of an argument it is: it evidently puts three assertions in a believer's mouth. 1. I will gladly turn out of the way of holiness, which I delight in, which my renewed nature obliges me to love, and which is made a safe way by a blessed covering, that God has promised to me in it. 2. I am glad to get leave to walk in the way of sin, which I hate; I am resolved to go in it, though contrary to mine own nature; for now I understand, I may be kept from both the hateful way, and from the end of it. 3. God has been very kind to me; he has not only made me comely with his comeliness put upon me, but he has assured me, I shall never lose that privilege; therefore I will study to disoblige him all that I can. What thoughts have these men of the children of God, who can think that they will reason so? But now, if we make them say just the contrary, they will speak like themselves. Sin not, O believers, for God has created a defence upon all your glory. 1. Ye delight in the way of holiness, take heart and go in it; for the Lord has assured you of strength, and promised, that ye shall never turn out of that way that ye love. 2. Strive against sin

that ye hate ; ye have that, which was your greatest discouragement, taken away, fear of want of success ; ye shall surely overcome at length. 3. God has bestowed a great privilege upon you, therefore live no more in any thing offensive to him, that has shown you so much kindness. If you draw an argument for sin from this, all must be turned into downright contradiction and nonsense ; but it naturally encourages to, and presses obedience. Then, I say, use the encouragement, and obey ; live not in sin, because grace abounds ; but let the love of Christ constrain you to live to him, who has purchased and bestows so great a mercy on you. Once more,

6. O blessed souls, give thanks to the name of the Lord, make his praise glorious. It is remarkable, that when it is promised, that the walls of the church shall be salvation, it is likewise promised, that the gates shall be praise, Isa. lx. 18. "Thou shalt call thy walls, salvation ; and thy gates, praise." None should enter here, but with the voice of praise and thanksgiving : from that time forward they have reason to say, with admiration, What hath the Lord wrought for us ! O ! praise the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of his covenant ; sing and say with Moses, "I will publish the name of the Lord : ascribe ye greatness unto our God," Dent. xxxii. 3. "The Lord is my strength and song ; and he is become my salvation : he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, and I will exalt him," Exod. xv. 2. Let your thoughts praise him, let your words praise him, let your wrath praise him : let the high praises of God be in your mouth ; praise him in his sanctuary, and call in every thing that hath breath to help you to praise. "Praise ye the Lord."

But now, it remains we speak to the *Third* sort of persons mentioned, disconsolate believers. A sort of persons there are, who dare not deny that the Lord hath opened their eyes, let them see their own vileness, made them weary of their filthy raiment, and discovered to them, in a heart-engaging way, the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is the beauty and glory, the excellency and comeliness of believers ; which discoveries have had that effect upon them, that now it is their top wish, that which they desire above all things, "that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness, but that which is by the faith of him, that they may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death : " and yet notwithstanding all this, they walk all the day long, with backs bowed down, full of heaviness ; they refuse to be comforted.

If there be any such sorrowful souls in this house, this doctrine bids me endeavour to reason them out of their fears, though I confess it is a hard task to do so ; for they are usually most subtle reasoners against their own comfort ; yet this shall not deter us from an essay this way. We say then to such sorrowful souls, Why are ye disquieted, and why are your souls cast down in you ? Do ye well to be sorrowful, and to refuse comfort ? God, I may say, allows it on you ; and why will not ye accept of your allowance ? What ye want in yourselves, that ye have in Christ ; and that ye may have a strong consolation, ye have heard what a glorious covering God has stretched over all your glory, under which ye may have soul-refreshing communion with Christ ; for, as the word is elsewhere rendered, this is a covering of the bride's chamber, where the bride and bridegroom enjoyed refreshing communion ? Why then are ye disquieted, and why are your souls cast down within you ?

Oh! says one, ask ye, why? I am sorrowful indeed, and I have but reason to be so. The time was and that not long ago, when in Christ, I had strength in him, I had life, had light, had hope, and then I found communions sweet, I run in the way of these duties, my heart was full of hope, my arms were strong, my face shined; but now my strength is perished from the Lord, my hope is lost, my life is lost, and Christ has cast me off for ever; and therefore look away from me, labour not to comfort me: "I do well to be sorrowful, and that to death."

Were it, O distressed soul, as thou sayest, there would indeed be reason for all this impatience and grief; but I would hope to make it appear, that thou art in a mistake, and hast not that reason to fear that is pretended; and therefore I beg that ye may patiently hear one, who hath a message from God to you, and who desires indeed to sympathise with you. Poor distressed soul, let me, 1. In the name of God, ask you, whether we, whether ye yourselves, had better believe God that cannot lie, or your unbelief, your treacherous hearts? God says, That those who have once put on the Lord Jesus Christ for glory, shall not lose him; for, "upon all the glory there shall be a defence." Your hearts, say ye, have lost all: who shall be believed? God, or you? "Judge ye." 2. Have not your hearts said so formerly, and have ye not after that found the glory revive, and grow fresh again? which is proof enough you have been mistaken; but, found ye ever God to be so? I hope ye dare not say it. 3. Therefore it is certain, that your glory is still in you, and it shall revive again. It may appear low, but the life continues still, therefore there is hope: for, "Is there not hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease; though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant;" Job. xiv. 7, 8, 9. So shall it be with you. For, 4. The Lord has undertaken, by virtue of the defence formerly mentioned, to maintain your lot, and your life, and where there is life, there will be a revival. "Why should ye then fear in the day of evil, when the iniquity of your heels doth compass you about?" Psal. xlix. 5. "Yet hope in God, for ye shall praise him yet, who is the help and health of your countenance, and your God." Psal. xlii. 11.

Oh! but, says another, ask ye me, why I am cast down and disquieted? I am not so without reason; for, from the day that I thought I put on the Lord Jesus Christ for beauty and glory, I never had one minute's respite; I have been engaged in close fight with temptations from sin within, Satan and the world without: there is a confederacy against me, and when I say, I will take comfort to myself, it is far from me, for my enemies are against me on every hand, I never get a breathing time; and therefore, I now have almost quit hopes, and given Christ, and all that I had by him, for lost; for, "what is my strength, that I should hope? Is my strength the strength of stones? or, is my flesh brass?" No, surely one day I will perish. My present sorrow, by reason of the fury of the oppressor, shall terminate in everlasting sorrow, for his victory: and if the Lord be my defender, why is all this evil upon me? It is a wonder that I have not given over before this time, but I am sure, I shall do so before it be long.

This, I must confess, is a sad case, but I dare say, it is not singular; thou art not alone, thou hast others to sympathise with thee in it. It is sad, but God forbid we should give it over for lost. 1. Then I say, it is indeed

as thou sayest, a wonder, and to eternity will be so, that thou hast not yielded before this time. 2. I pray, what made thee stand so long? That it was thy own strength thou darrest not say, therefore thou must own, God has hitherto strengthened thee with the covering of his protection: he did not promise that thou shouldst meet with no enemies, but that he would cover thy head in the day of battle; and, has he not been hitherto as good as his word? If not, how comes it that thou hast not given over before now? 3. Whereas thou sayest, what is thy strength, that thou shouldst hope? I say, it was not thy strength that preserved thee one moment, but this covering, and that is able to protect thee still. 4. Ye say, ye will not stand out long, ye will yield at length. I answer, unbelief says so; but have not ye stood beyond the first time that it fixed? It may be, it said to you a month hence, that ye would not maintain your ground a day longer, and yet ye have, and are as like to hold out now as then; unbelief has lied, and God has kept his word. 5. Thy temptations are above thy strength, and I believe thou sayest so not without ground; they may be not only above thy natural strength, but more, above the strength that hitherto thou hast received from Christ: but are they above the strength that is in Christ for the fetching? Thou must learn to trust more in, and rejoice more, because of the strength of grace that is in Christ, than that which is in thyself. 6. Be of good cheer, I say, for thou shalt stand, say unbelief or Satan what they will; for God has said, "that upon all the glory there shall be a defence." Thy God commands strength, make strong, be not afraid, for God will help thee. "Thus saith the Lord unto thee, I, even I am he that comforteth you; who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid and forget the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and fear every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor? I have put my words in thy mouth, and as hitherto, I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, so I will do, and there shall be upon all the glory a defence."

I thought to have proceeded to other cases, but fear that I have already exceeded, which forces me, though unwilling, to wind up all that I have to say to this sort of persons, in the few following assertions, which I shall but name, without applying them in any instances.

1. No man is by this covering absolutely secured against assaults: all that go to heaven, will have enemies to do with on the road.

2. No man is hereby secured absolutely against sin: "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sins not." And as we heard before, the covenant supposes, that Christ's seed will in something deviate from the way of God; and that they may be faulty. The strength then of this defence, and the comfort of it lies in these four things. 1. Ye shall not sin that sin that is unto death; this is impossible, as we have heard at length: how this is provided against, had time allowed, might have been further cleared. 2. The sins ye fall into, shall not separate Christ and you, shall not divest you of this glory; for the promise of pardon to such sins, is one part of one or more of the coverings which are upon your glory.

3. Ye shall held out in the conflict with your spiritual adversaries; ye shall continue fighting against them; this covers none but soldiers, and that when fighting: nay, those who once have this stretched over them, shall never quit the field, never give over the conflict so long as there is an enemy.

4. Though enemies set sore upon you, they shall not prevail, but ye shall at length be victorious.

Now, that ye may have solid and abiding consolation from this privilege, there are two parting advices I would offer to you, for it is like we may never all meet again.

1. Be sure, that you have indeed put on the Lord Jesus Christ for beauty and glory. Had time allowed us to have followed the particular cases we began with, we should have discovered, that your wavering as to the certainty of this, is the true reason of your want of the consolation that the truth insisted upon is apt to give : but now it is like ye may ask me, How shall we be sure of this, that we have indeed put on the Lord Jesus Christ? The demand is such, as would require more time than we can now allow it ; yet, that I may not altogether frustrate your expectations, I wish ye may follow the four following directions.

1. If you would be sure, then try it, “ search your ownelves, and try yourselves, know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.”

2. Take the right time for this work. I cannot stand long upon telling what times are proper, what not ; but one thing I say, that the time which most part take is a very improper season, and that is, when they are taken off their feet by the violence of a temptation. This readily occasions, as sad experience shows, one of three mistakes ; either, First, It makes you judge too favourably of your case. Thus it is with many hypocrites, after their conscience is galled with the sense of some sin, they fall, as it were, in a passion against all sin, and turn all out of doors ; but, as soon as they cool, and the smartings of conscience are over, they invite them back again ; now, if they make a judgment of themselves by their carriage at that time when they bear hard upon sin, then they will readily conclude all right. Secondly, It may make you judge too harshly ; for this is one of the seasons wherein a child of God is not himself, and if he judge of his state by what he is, when violent, then he will determine contrary to truth, that he is sin’s slave. Thirdly, If both these be escaped, and you get a solid evidence to fix upon, then readily you will offer this for a salve to your conscience ; and this may lay a foundation for such trouble as may be double to what now you feel. You are to mind, it is not enough to lay a foundation for solid peace to a child of God, after a fall, to know that he has an interest in Christ, but there must be a renewed application to him for pardon, and an intimation of it to the soul : if this be wanting, or neglected, you will soon find the smart of it. The time then to judge, is not when thus you are in an extraordinary case, but when you have the greatest calm and are most yourself.

3. If ye would know whether ye have put on Christ, then fix upon the right marks, and these I would have you to use. 1. Which are not only scripture marks, but which you know to be such. 2. I would have them such as respect the being of grace, and will abide with you under all temptations.

4. Lay not too much stress upon affections ; in young people they are strong and are frequently cross to judgment ; they are easily wrought upon, especially at such occasions, either by novelty, or by variety of gifts, sympathy with others, surprise or some such things as these, and they may be where there is little religion, as the issue shows too often. I cannot insist upon these, wherefore I come to the

2. Advice, which I would leave with you, and it is this ; as ye would study to have Christ for beauty and glory, so take care that ye walk in him. I cannot stay now to multiply directions to this purpose. I shall

comprise them all in that one given by the apostle, 1 Pet. v. 5. "Be clothed with humility." If ye take this one advice along, I dare engage ye shall not be a stranger to comfort. The people of God have no such enemy as pride, and no such friend as humility. Pride sets God and them at odds, and turns him to be their enemy; humility invites him to the soul, and he comes upon its invitation. He will bear many things in his people, but if you belong to him, humble he will have you; and if gentler methods will not do it, before he obtain not his end, he will leave you, till you make yourself a scandal to religion, and then he will make you a Magor-missabib, a terror to thyself and others, till you be humbled to purpose. To enforce this advice, I shall say three things of pride, and as many of humility. 1. Pride is an enemy to Christ, it cries down his fulness, and cries up man's emptiness: and therefore if you love Christ, hate it. 2. It is an enemy to credit, though this be that which it aims at; a notable instance of this we have in Jonah. 3. It is an enemy to comfort: this the people of God can tell from woeful experience; it keeps them from the comfort they might have, it imbitters their present enjoyments; nay, it provokes God to take them away. On the other hand, if you be clothed with humility, then I assure you, 1. You shall never want a guide; "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way," Psal. xxv. 9. "And with the lowly is wisdom," Prov. xi. 2. 2. You shall never want good company; "The high and lofty one dwells with the meek and lowly, to revive the heart of the humble, to revive the spirit of the contrite one," Isa. lvii. 15. 3. You shall never want grace to help you in time of need; "for God, who resists the proud, gives grace to the humble," 1 Pet. v. 5. Prov. iii. 34. And if you would indeed be humble, then look oft to Christ, oft to yourselves, oft to the law of God, compare not yourselves with others, and look not only what you have, but what you want, and where that was got which you have; walk on in this road, and assuredly goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life. The Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones, and ye shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. The Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory; and upon all the glory there shall be a defence, and there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm, and from rain. Now, to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON VI.

FAITH'S VIEWS OF THE GLORY OF GOD; OR, THE TRIUMPH
OF FAITH.

Jesus saith unto her, said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? JOHN. xi. 40.

THE history of the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus, by our Lord, is so well known that I need not introduce myself to the words read, which

make a part of it, by any deduction of that history. And therefore I shall, waving the formality of an introduction, immediately, and without any more ado, take the words read in this 40th verse, under consideration. In this, we have our Lord's reply to what Martha spoke in the 39th verse. Now that we may make way for an explication of this verse, we must offer you a short account of the person to whom he speaks, and of her case, in the few following remarks.

1. Martha was a godly woman, one for whom our Lord had a special love, as we read, ver. 5. of this chapter : but a woman she was, under a deep and heavy trouble, being lately deprived of a brother ; a brother beloved of her, a brother beloved of our Lord ; and, for any thing we know, an only brother.

2. Her trouble, heavy indeed in itself was yet mightily increased by the prevalency of unbelief over her, whereby she was diverted from the consideration of the wise and immutable purpose of the Lord, whereby the present trial was ordered for her, and was also detained from a due improvement of the sweet comforts our Lord had offered her under trouble, of which we have a large account, ver. 23, 25, 26, &c. And moreover, hereby, on the other hand, she was strongly inclined to pore upon vain, entangling, and disquieting thoughts, about means whereby she foolishly supposed, that this affliction, which was ordered by the unalterable counsel of the Lord, might have been prevented. Lord, says she, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," ver. 21.

2. The cope-stone was put upon her trouble, by unbelief's power and its prevailing so far, as to make her on the one hand, lay down the conclusion, that her trouble was irremediable, her case was beyond a cure ; he is dead, long dead, and stinking : and on the other hand, overlook the Lord's power, and slight the advance he made, and steps he was taking toward her delivery ; for, when he bids take away the stone, she thinks this to no purpose, and therefore is against his meddling. The plain meaning of her words in the preceding verse is, "It is to no purpose to open his grave, he is dead, and now past hope, and it will be to no purpose to lift the stone, which will increase our grief, prove noisome by the stench, and no way help him who is dead, and not to rise till the last day." To this our Lord answers in our text. "Jesus saith unto her, said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God."

In which words we have, not to break them too small, four things, which we shall take notice of, and a little open.

1. We have the importance of the answer pointed at, from an account of the giver of it, "Jesus saith unto her ;" Jesus who loved her, who never mistook a case, nor the cure of it ; Jesus, who well understood to "speak a word in season to the weary, and to have compassion on the ignorant, and such as are out of the way."

2. We have a sharp reproof given her, *First*, For her unbelief, in rejecting the encouraging revelation he had made of himself, with respect to her condition, verses 23, 25, 26, &c. And, *Secondly*, For her inadvertency, and forgetfulness of the advice formerly given her, that she should believe, as the way to get a good issue of her present strait : "Said I not unto thee?" &c. I once told thee, that the way to get a good issue was to believe, and must I tell thee it over again? Dost thou still persist in thy unbelief of me as the resurrection and the life? And misconstrue the advances I make toward your delivery? Whence, by the way, we may ob-

serve,—“ That unbelief not only is the immediate source and spring of most of the Lord’s people’s troubles, its very actings being indeed a heavy part of their load ; but moreover also, it doth procure to them sharp rebukes from the Lord.” Again, we may notice,—“ That the increase and continuance of the troubles of the Lord’s people, is in a great measure owing to their inadvertency, and forgetfulness of what the Lord is doing, or has done, or said for their relief and support.” 3. We have a direction formerly given, in order to her obtaining a comfortable issue of her present trial again renewed ; “ If thou wouldst believe.” “ What I told thee before, I tell thee again, That the only way to have a good issue is to believe. Never rack thyself about events, be not afraid, only believe.” If ye ask what faith he calls her to exercise here, I answer, 1. That faith which our Lord so much presses upon people in straits, is undoubtedly that faith which is of the operation of God, which is justifying and saving, to which our Lord attributes the cure of such as came to him, and which did receive from him the forgiveness of sins, Mark ii. 3. Yet, 2. We say, it is not that faith as it is justifying, or in that exercise or act of it which is commonly and justly called justifying faith. It is not a receiving the Lord as our righteousness, as the propitiation ; for this Martha had done before. But, 3. This belief or faith which she is directed to, is a looking toward the Lord as not only able, but as engaged, by the revelation he has made of himself in his word, to give his people a blessed issue of their trials and straits, how great soever they be. That same principal which receives the Lord as our righteousness in order to justification, enables also to look to him in all straits, as a very present help in trouble : and this last is that faith, which our Lord requires here and elsewhere, in the like cases. Only believe, that is, only eye the Lord, look only to him, expect relief only from him ; fear not thy getting of it, for thereby thou must either reflect upon his power, or faithfulness : and if thou thus believest, thou shalt see the glory of God. Whence note by the way.—That the true way to get an outgate from under any trial is to believe ; “ only believe,” Mark v. 36. And “ if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see,” &c. Again, from our Lord’s renewing this direction, we may observe—That new, or growing trials, do not so much require new cordials or new discoveries, as the due use of old ones that have been neglected. At least, it is so often, and our Lord judges so in these. 4. We have in the words a notable privilege proposed and promised, upon condition, the advice given were complied withal ; “ If thou believest, thou shalt see the glory of God.” Now, this privilege is not the raising her brother presently : he indeed designed this, and in this it was, he resolved to show her the glory of God, and he quarrelled her, for her not believing him able to do this, and even that he would do it, in case it should be for the glory of God, and her good ; but I say, this he couches in a general, thereby showing, that as to the particular way of our delivery, we must submit that to sovereignty, which is not to be limited as to ways, means, particular events, or seasons, while the Lord has been pleased to assure us, that the end shall be secured : and therefore, he lays down this general, which the faith of the Lord’s people may in all trials lay hold on. “ Thou shalt see the glory of God :” which imports, 1. That her trial would have an issue. 2. That the Lord’s glory would be seen in it ; and this surely should quiet us, that we shall have our chief end, and God his glory. Since every believer should, and will make God’s glory his chief end, he ought to rest content whatever his trials be, when

the Lord assures him this end shall be obtained. 3. Hereby she is assured, that she should see the glory of the Lord ; that is, that not only should the Lord be glorified by the issue of this trial, but moreover she should have the satisfaction of seeing that God was glorified, and even how this did contribute to his glory. 4. Hereby she is directed to expect that his glory should be joined with her good ; for this is proposed as a promise and privilege ; and nothing is so but what is for our good. Now, sure here is all that can be desired, when God promises, that upon her believing in the issue of the present trial the Lord should have glory, and she have good and advantage by it, and that even sensibly, and to her experience, she should see the glory of God, or experience it.

Now, from the words thus explained, of the many truths which we might note, we shall only lay before you this one.

DOCT. "To believe, is the sure way to get a sight of the glory of God, in giving a blessed issue to the most perplexing cases which can befall the Lord's people : " or thus, " however hopeless like the case of a child of God, at any time, may be ; yet, if he will believe, he shall see the glory of God."

Nay, may I say, however hopeless like the case of any may be, yet if they will believe, they shall see the glory of God. " Blessed is the person that believes, for there shall be a performance of those things that are to be of the Lord," Luke i. 45. In prosecuting this truth, we shall endeavour,

I. To show you what it is to believe.

II. We shall lay down some considerations, for clearing the truth of the doctrine, and showing what ground there is for believing in the most hopeless like cases, which can befall the Lord's people.

III. We shall show you what of the glory of God may be seen in the issue.

IV. We shall show what this seeing of this glory imports.

V. We shall hint at the excellency of this way of believing ; and,

VI. We shall apply the whole.

To return then,

I. We are to show what it is to believe ; and, as we insinuated formerly, here we are not to speak of faith in general, but of that special exercise of it, which is required of the Lord's people in their straits. Now, faith thus taken, we shall open in the few following particulars, which may also contribute somewhat toward a due understanding of faith, in its other acting.

1. Then to believe, is to eye the Lord, to look towards God. " Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved : for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. When believers are in straits, when they sink in the deep mire, and find no standing, when, with Jonah, they go down unto the bottoms of the mountains, and the depths close them round, then do they find, that somewhere they must look for relief ; they are not able to hold themselves above water : somewhere therefore they must look ; unbelief offers some mountains, things that have an appearance of strength, to which when any do betake themselves, they are put in a worse, and not in a better condition, and made, at length, to confess, " that in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the mountains, nay even from the multitude of them ; " whereupon the soul looks toward the Lord, as the only one, in whom salvation can be had. " Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 23.

2. To believe, is to look towards God in Christ. "No man cometh to the Father but by me," saith our Lord, John xiv. 6. As Christ is the way to the Father, in order to justification, so he is the way in all particular straits. When we are brought to any straits, and think of looking toward God, if we have any true notions of him, as he is in himself, without respect to Christ Jesus, it will add to our trouble, and put us in such a fright as they, Micah vi. 6. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Here is a perplexity great enough by itself: thoughts of the Lord, if not as revealed in Christ, if true, will not relieve us in any strait, but cast us into a greater. Faith then only looks toward God in Christ: thus Jonah in his strait, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple," chap. iii. ver. 4. The temple, the ark, the mercy seat, were types of Christ; and toward the Lord, as discovered there, he resolves he will look.

3. To believe, is to look toward God in Christ, as revealed in the word. The Lord is the invisible God, and no other way can we see him, than by faith, I mean, while here; sense can by no means perceive him, and reason, darkened by the fall, can form but very dark and unbecoming thoughts of him; for God, and the things of God, are foolishness to a natural man. If then we would have a sight of God, we must look to him, as revealed in the word. When Moses desired, Exod. xxxiii. 18. to see the glory of God, how doth God answer him, ver. 19. "And he said 'I will make my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.'" Here is the way, he sees the Lord in a proclamation of the Lord's name, as we see in the following chapter.

4. To believe is to look toward God in the promise, to receive or embrace the promise. Great and precious promises are given to believers, 2 Pet. i. 4. and faith receives them; it assents, as to the other discoveries of the word, so particularly to the promises, which not only contain glorious discoveries of the divine excellences, but also an engagement of them to believers; and faith gives entire credit to the promise, as to both; persuading the soul, that, as the Lord is, what his word discovers him to be, so also what he has said, he will do; in due time there shall be a punctual performance of what is promised.

5. To believe is to credit the word, not because of any suitableness in the things to our thoughts, or probabilities, or feasible means of the Lord's accomplishing what is promised therein: nay, to entertain any persuasion of the truths of God, upon such grounds, is not faith, but conjecture; but faith looks only at the Lord's authority; all its stress is laid upon this, "thus saith the Lord." Faith stands not in the wisdom of men, that is, it leans not on the reasonings or conjectures of men from appearances, but in the power of God, that is, it leans only on the testimony of God, approving itself such to the souls of believers, by its own glorious power, whereby, without borrowing help from any other signs, it evidences itself to be the Lord's word, with a light so strong as carries the soul into an assent; this is, we conceive, the meaning of that passage, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

6. To believe, is to wait with expectation on God alone. Now this waiting (which is the exercise of faith, that is especially suited to the purpose in hand) we conceive, cannot be better explained, than by considering the opposite actings of unbelief. To believe then, is to wait on God: to

wait, I say, 1. In opposition to going away to other things. When one has come to God, and finds not that relief that present straits seem to require, then unbelief is for trying about, but faith is for staying still. 2. Faith waits, in opposition to wearying : while the case is perplexing, and somewhat troublesome, unbelief works a sort of a weariness, but faith waits, and cheers the soul with expectation of the punctual accomplishment of the promise, in its season. 3. Faith waits in opposition to giving over. Unbelief says, "This evil is of the Lord, why wait I any longer?" It is for giving quite over, as hopeless, almost every case ; but faith keeps up here, and will by no means allow to argue against the truth of the promise, from any seeming delay. 4. To believe, is to wait, in opposition to haste of all sorts : "He that believeth makes no haste," either in concluding for or against himself, but waits until God appear, and relieve him effectually.

In a word, from the whole we may conclude, that, to believe, is, in all our straits and troubles, be they what they will, to look to the Lord, and expect an issue upon the credit of his bare word, not only when it is favoured by no outward appearance, or probability, as to the accomplishment of our expectation, but even when all appearances cross it, and seem to look another way : then do we believe, when we can put God's say against all opposition, and lean to it, "not staggering at the promise through unbelief," but accounting that God can remove all difficulties out of the way. Leaving this,

II. We shall now show you the certainty of this way of believing, as well as the warrant it has, in a few considerations.

1. Then, we may consider that God is the glorious and sovereign disposer of all the trials, and indeed of all the providences of any sort, that do befall the children of men. "The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of the Lord ; he kills, and he makes alive ; he wounds, and he heals ; neither is there any who can deliver out of his hands : " and, according to his sovereign appointment, so every thing falls out to his people, and to all the children of men : a hair of our heads cannot fall to the ground, save when and how it is ordered by him. The winds and the seas obey him ; even the most unruly creatures receive his commands ; yea, and the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord : his kingdom rules over all.

2. To him also it doth undoubtedly belong to dispose of all trials, as to their events. He commands in the raging of the sea, and, upon his command, it turns calm : he stills the tumults of the people, and he commands storms into a calm : as he kills, so he makes alive ; as he bringeth down to the grave, so he bringeth up : the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich ; he bringeth low, and lifteth up, 1 Sam. ii. He sets bounds to the sea, when it rages, when the billows thereof make a noise, and roar, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further ; here shall thy proud waves be stayed." So also doth he bound, according to his pleasure, all the trials of his people, nay, of the children of men. "To God the Lord do the issues from death belong," Psal. lxxviii. 20.

3. That his people might be encouraged in all troubles, to put their trust in him, he has been pleased in his word to reveal, and so to reveal the glorious properties of his nature, as to satisfy all who read and understand, that there is no case too hard for him, in which possibly they may be cast by any turn of providence. With him is wisdom and strength ; he hath counsel and understanding : behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again ; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening : "What-

ever pleased him he hath done in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth." There is nothing too hard for God, "who doth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number," even "great things which we cannot comprehend," Job v. 9.

4. That his people might yet have the firmer and clearer ground for their faith, he has been pleased to engage himself, and all these glorious properties of his nature, in many great and precious promises, suiting their various straits; all which are summed up in that great one, "I will be thy God;" that has alone more in it, than can be understood; it has all the other promises in it; and, if thy case cannot be suited by any one of them, it has this more in it: if thou do believe, if it be in God that can help thee, thou shalt not want it: and O! what inconceivable mercy is wrapt up here! who can tell what there is in a God!

5. This being once understood, no case is now hopeless; what cannot a God do? Is there any thing too hard for God? Are not all things possible with him? It is only folly and unbelief that supposes any case now incurable; and God challenges his people for it, Isa. xl. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord?" (that is, God knows not, nor regards my condition) "And my judgment is passed over from my God?" (that is, it seems now even beyond the power, and past the might of my God, to judge and plead my cause against my enemies, and to execute judgment against them that oppress me.) To which expostulation or challenge, he subjoins another, showing the folly of these suppositions, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding; he giveth power to the faint, and, to them that have no might, he increaseth strength."

6. Matters being thus, there is no more requisite, but only, that, by faith, we take hold of God's engagement of himself, and of his holy properties; and hereby God is, as it were, put under a sort of necessity to give thee a blessed issue of thy perplexing case. There is no danger as to the cure of any case that God possesseth skill of, and that is of all, if only he be put to it. According to the person's faith, so it will be to him: and hence it appears, that the one direction given by our Lord to Jairus, Mark v. 36. comprehends all; "fear not, only believe."

III. We shall now proceed to show, what of God's glory is to be seen, in the issues he gives his people of their perplexed cases. Now, for clearing the way, you must know, that glory imports three things. First, Some excellency or perfection. Secondly, The manifestation, or discovery of that perfection. Thirdly, Something eminent and remarkable in both: A great excellency, and manifested in a way becoming its greatness and excellency, this is glory: and the glory of God is a remarkable manifestation of the glorious excellencies of the Lord, either by words or works. Now the way being thus far cleared, we say,

1. The glorious being of God is signally manifested in the issues he gives his people of their trials. When he comes to deliver his people, then he makes even men, otherwise not observant, to notice that he is. Thus, when Israel is in a great strait, and David promises himself a blessed issue, from the Lord's owning him in his conflict with Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 46. he expects a glorious discovery of the being of God; "This day," says he to Goliath, "will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the

host of the Philistines this day, unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth ; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

2. The glorious sovereignty of God appears with a dazzling lustre, and so clearly in the issues he gives his people of their most perplexing cases, that even enemies do with wonder behold the rays of this excellency. When God gave a glorious issue, Dan. iii. to the three children's trial, then it was that the proud king was brought to an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, ver. 26. which he denied a little before, ver. 15. there he says, "Who is the God that will deliver out of my hands?" Now he owns their God, (the most high God) and afterwards owns, ver. 29. "that there is no other God like unto him." And remarkable above many is Darius' acknowledgment upon Daniel's delivery, chap. vi. 35. and onwards, which ye may view at your leisure. Christ commanding the storm to a calm, filled onlookers with wonder at his sovereignty over the seas and winds, these unruly creatures, Mat. viii. 27. "The men marvelled, saying, what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

3. The glory of God's power appears in the issues he gives of hopeless like trials. This Darius observes with wonder in that forecited Daniel vi. 26.—"I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel ; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth ; who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

4. The glory of God's wisdom appears in the issues of his people's trials ; when they observe the glorious ends he compasses, the surprising means he uses, the seasonable times he pitches on, and all the lovely circumstances of his actings in their deliverances : then will they, with Hannah in the issue of her trial, be made to own and see, "That the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed," 1 Sam. ii. 3. And with those, Mark vii. 37, who, when our Lord cured the deaf man, were astonished beyond measure ; they will say, "He hath done all things well : he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! In wisdom hast thou made them all : the earth is full of thy riches," Psal. civ. 24.

5. The glory of his justice towards both his people and his enemies, is remarkably seen upon such occasions : so that a man shall say, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous ; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth," Psal. lviii. 11.

6. The glorious riches of unparalleled mercy. This the issue of the church's trials made them to notice with wonder, Micah vii. 18. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

7. To add no more, the glorious faithfulness of God appears in this, when he delivers Israel from Egypt, and puts an issue to their trouble there ; then he is known by his name Jehovah, Exod. vi. 3. A God that performs his promises. Now, surely here is a most sweet and taking discovery ; when the sight of it has been so affecting to others, as we have heard, who have neither eyes to see, nor have they that interest in the things seen, which heightens the glory of them to his people who have both ;

what must and will the sight of this glory be to his own, when they see it? And this leads me on to the,

IV. Inquiry, to show, what their seeing the glory of the Lord in the issue of their trials imports to them, and we conceive it comprehensive of these.

1. It imports the certainty of the issue; "Thou shalt see the glory of God." That is, thou shalt assuredly have an issue. While trials are on their progress, God's glory is so far from being seen, that all things seem to rub upon his honour; "his way is in the sea, his paths in the great waters, his footsteps are not known." His enemies are high, his people are low; his wisdom hid, his power doubted, and his faithfulness called in question. Nor are things mended, until the trial get an issue, and then the glory of God, before veiled, is seen. So that we may evidently see, that this imports the certainty of the issue. It may be the issue may not be such as thou wouldest have it, or at the time, or in the way thou wouldest have it; but an issue thou shalt have.

2. It imports the comfortableness of the issue; it shall be such, as the very seeing of it, and of the glory of God in it, shall be a privilege, and that so great, as to compensate the disadvantage thou art at by the trial, and by the want of it. "Said I not unto thee," &c. as much as if he had said, I have told thee to wait on me by faith, and thou shalt get such a sight of the end, as will reward thee for thy attendance.

3. It imports advantage in the issue, bearing proportion to the glory that God shall have by the whole of the trial. If God get glory, thou shalt see it, that is, enjoy it. Now, surely in every circumstance of our trial God has a hand, and will have glory from all the steps he takes; and if we believe, we shall see this glory. We shall have all the advantage. Not only shall the God of glory manifest his excellencies in our trials, to our advantage and for our good, but in the issue we shall have, over and above the advantage of seeing and enjoying, all the glory that God has got. O inconceivably great privilege!

4. It imports sensible advantage: thou shalt see; that is, thou shalt have sensible and experimental discoveries of the Lord. The effects of God's appearance shall be sensible, either to thy natural or spiritual senses, or both.

5. It imports clear discoveries of the glory of the Lord. All the mists that now darken and obscure the glorious outgoings of the wisdom, power, and mercy of God, shall then be dissipated, and thou shalt have a clear discovery of the glory of the Lord. "Thou shalt see."

6. It imports great pleasure, as the genuine result of the whole. Dazzling lustre or glory wherein we are interested, and have some concern, when seen in a clear light, gives an inexpressible pleasure. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" Eccl. xi. 7. That which is glorious is also pleasant; but glory, when it is seen, that is, when not obscurely known, but in a clear light, is doubly pleasant. Much more is glory pleasant, when it is not only seen by us, but when it is ours as to all the advantage we can desire of it; and, most of all, glory must be ravishingly sweet, when thus seen, if it be great, such as undoubtedly the glory of the Lord is.

V. I should now have proceeded according to the method laid down, to show the excellency of this way of believing; but this discourse, notwithstanding our utmost care to keep it within bounds, has already grown in-

sensibly to such a length, but this we must refer to the application, where we may have access to touch at it. And seeing,

VI. We cannot overtake the application we designed of this truth, therefore we only,

1. Improve it for information, in a few short inferences.

2. We shall put up our discourse in a word of exhortation.

I. Then of the many inferences we might draw from this point, we content ourselves to mention the few following. Is it so, that the glory of the Lord is to be seen in the issue of the most perplexing trials of such as do believe? Then,

1. Thence we may draw this conclusion, that the Lord is at work, ordering and disposing every circumstance in his people's trials, that the result and issue of the whole may bear the impression of his glory. There is nothing more sure than this, that God will quit the concerns of his glory to none; and therefore, what is in the issue to discover his glory, he will employ his own wisdom in ordering, and his own hand in polishing it for that end. Let us therefore beware of quarreling circumstances in our trials, and looking unto them as deformities, lest we be found to quarrel the Lord, who ordereth the falling of every hair from our head, and who will get himself glory by it in the issue.

2. We may hence also draw this sweet conclusion, that assuredly all those things that are any way instrumental in our trouble, are under the Lord's command and disposal, as they are concerned in our trials. If our afflictions and trials be a piece of God's work, wherein he designs to manifest his glory, surely there is not a tool made use of, but what he takes in his own hand, and what he rules; and therefore we need not fear hurt by them, how sharp and dangerous soever they may be. O poor believer that art surrounded with temptations, devils, fiery darts, and enemies of all sorts, each of them ready, as it were, to destroy thee, "fear not, only believe." Thou hast as little, nay much less reason to fear, as a man who has a boil upon his breast, or any other part of his body, has, when a skilful chirurgeon is cutting it with a lance. The lance is sharp, and would quickly cut him to the heart, but it is in a wise workman's hand, who will use it for his good, and if he get any hurt by it, it surely is occasioned by his own shaking and unsteadiness. So likewise is it with you, your enemies, however dangerous they may seem to be, are yet all in the Lord's hand; and therefore you can get no hurt, if you do not procure it to yourselves, by your own fear and distrust. And may not your own experience tell you that it is so, even you who are the most despondent in all this house this day? If these fiery darts, these enemies, had not been in the hand of the Lord, then had they not ere now pierced you through and through, and ruined you quite? May you not then say with the Psalmist? Psal. xli. 11. "By this I know that I am favoured of thee, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me."

3. We may draw this inference, that believers have a great security for the issue of their trials. God designs the manifestation of his glory in them, and therefore your deliverance and God's glory are upon the same bottom. You cannot miss of the issue, unless he fail of the glory which he designs to have: fear not then, O believers, the issue of the darkest cases; God will not lose his glory. If he leave thee who trustest in him, he loses the glory that is as dear to him as his life.

4. We may hence learn, why we see so little of the glory of God in the

issue of our trials : we do not believe. Ah unbelief ! it is the woful source of all our wants in this sort, and indeed in any respect. “ Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of the Lord.”

I. To improve this truth for exhortation, time not allowing us to mention what otherwise we would have inclined to do : here there are a great multitude, and we hope not a few of such as the Lord will own as his, and it is like as many persons as many different cases, the one half whereof is not, nor can be understood by the most discerning ministers, far less by me, who may with far more justice say, than Agur did, “ I am more brutish than any man, and have not the knowledge of a man ;” and yet under a necessity we are, however unworthy, by virtue of our office, to give every one their portion ; and here we would have been in a sad strait, if our Lord had not left us this one allowance that answers all cases, whatever differences there may be among them, whatever your case may be, we say as Christ has said, and we exhort you in his name, Believe, only believe, and ye shall see the glory of the Lord :

1. O believe ! for this gives glory to God. He that believeth, putteth to his seal to the truth of God, and gives him the glory of his truth, and so of all his other attributes. When we put to our seal that God is true, we give him the glory of all that he says of himself in his word ; we seal what God has said of his properties, of his nature, and in a word, every thing that the word speaks : and we deprive Satan of that which he, no doubt, valued himself much upon in his seduction of man. He valued himself, that he prevailed with innocent man, and while he was in his perfection, to listen rather to his suggestions, than to the truth of God ; but he is shamefully foiled, when man, even in his weak estate, dare credit God not only upon a bare word, but even upon that when all Satan’s skill and power are employed to darken the truth, and all appearances seem to cross it. O believer ! then shame Satan, give glory to God.

2. Only believe ; for, as the way of believing is the way to gain thy chief end, the glory of God ; so it is the sure way to reach a blessed issue of your trial, whatever it be. For, 1. It is the way that Christ, upon all occasions directs to, Mark v. 36. Whatever thy strait be, we find whatever the case be that you bring to Christ, this was, and is still the way he directs thee to ; “ Fear not, only believe.” Look through the whole gospel, and thou wilt find it so. 2. The promise is to it ; “ Said I not unto thee,” &c. 3. The nature of God binds him to it, 1 Sam. ii. 30. “ Them that honour me I will honour.” And, 4. The godly have all found this true. Read Hebrews xi.

3. As thou shalt have peace in the issue, so it is the way to get peace and quiet, till the issue come. There is much peace and joy in believing, Rom. xv. 13. For, 1. Here thou hast a solid ground of repose, the sufficiency of God Almighty, and the word of him that cannot lie. 2. Here thou hast protection against all thy fears ; “ What time I am afraid I will trust in thee ;” Psal. lvi. 3. 3. Here thou mayest be delivered from all thy cares : “ Cast thou thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee ;” Psal. lv. 22. And this is only done by faith. Compare for this purpose, Matth. xi. 28. with John vi. 35. 4. Here thou art secured of strength, proportioned to thy burden, 1 Cor. x. 13.

4. This way of believing has in it all that thy case can require : if it be in God that can help thee, here thou hast it : for here thou hast God engaged by promise to be thine, and his word for thy security, that he will be so.

5. This way of believing is notably suited to the times, wherein the holy God has cast our lot. All things are reeling, and full of uncertainty; events will prove so far otherwise than expectation, that they will prove the wisest of men, fools. All the politic conclusions of men may and will fail, "but the just shall live by faith;" and if thou takest this way, thou shalt be as mount Zion, "that cannot be removed," Psal. cxxv.

6. This way of believing is notably suited unto the trials thou art like to meet with this day; such as, 1. The prevalency of the church's enemies. Now if they do prevail, then faith will assure thee, that they are only established for correction. 2. The falls of saints, or such who seemed to be so. Now this will not shake you; for faith leans not upon men, but upon the Lord, 1 Cor. ii. 4. 3. The failing of things seen. All visible props shake; well, faith will give thee a life in invisibles.

7. To add no more; this way of believing is a way notably suited unto the present duty of communicating. Here thou art called to a feast. And 1. Faith will give thee the only ground that is solid, for expecting a fill; some, it may be, expect much here, because they are well prepared; others, because such and such ministers are here. If your expectations lean here, we have enough of you, you are upon a wrong ground: God will blast ministers to you, and make your preparations appear to be what they are; but while these shall be sent empty away, faith will lay hold upon the Lord's promised presence in ordinances. This is the communion of the blood and body of Christ, leaned to by faith; is another sort of a ground, than a thousand of these others, as to the expectation of success in the ordinances. 2. Faith will fit thee for a feast; faith fits for fruition: "If thou wilt believe, thou shalt see the glory of God." 3. Faith will eat this food; it is not to be tasted by sense, and therefore only by faith, (that is, the evidence of things not seen,) can this food be eaten. He that cometh to Christ, "shall never hunger, and that believeth, shall never thirst," John vi. 35. So that we see, to come to Christ, or to believe, is to eat the flesh, and to drink the blood of the Son of man. 4. Faith will not only eat, but it will mix with your food, and digest it, and make it profitable. The word preached only then is profitable, and consequently the sacraments, when they are mixed with faith in them who receive them. 5. If you feel not at present, it will keep thee from disquietment, by assuring you, upon the credit of Christ's word, that what "thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," John xiii. 7. 6. It will keep thee living till sense come. "Now the just shall live by faith." Let me then resume my exhortation.

Upon all these grounds, is it so, that believing is the way to get a sight of the glory of God, and to reap all those advantages mentioned? Then, dearly beloved in our Lord, by all that is dear to you, by the mercies of God, if there be any consolation in Christ Jesus, any bowels of love, we entreat, beseech and obtest you, get faith, and live by the faith of the Son of God; and, for your direction, take only these two three words. 1. Fix upon your souls the sense of the inexpressible advantages of a life of faith, and your lamentable estrangement from it. 2. Cry mightily to the Lord for faith; say with the disciple, "Lord, increase our faith." 3. Wait upon him in ordinances for it: for "faith comes by hearing."

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED BY THE AUTHOR

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF A FRIEND.

SERMON VII.

For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 COR. iv. 16, 17, 18.

“MAN that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble ;” he is born to it “as the sparks fly upwards.” The world is nothing else but a scene of vanity, a stage whereon a continued tragedy is acted ; in which, however, some for a while may seem to act a very pleasing part, yet the conclusion of the play is ever sad and melancholy, while death shuts up the scene, and the shadows of the everlasting evening, as a curtain, are drawn over all the actors. And if we seriously observe the whole race of fallen Adam, plunged headlong into this bottomless deep of trouble, three things, amongst others, worthy of our most serious thoughts, will offer themselves to our view. 1. The exceeding sinfulness of sin, the source of all this trouble, may easily be discerned by any considerate observer of those streams which issue from it. The bitter fruit speaks the bitterness of the root. Who, or what has poisoned the streams of all earthly comforts? Who has made the world an hospital? Who has turned so many living men into dust and dry bones? Surely sin has done this ; “for the wages of sin is death ;” and its entry into the world has turned a delightsome palace into a melancholy prison, a garden of pleasure into a waste and howling wilderness : and, in one word, the world into a house of mourning, sorrow, and lamentation, wherein few laugh but fools : for “the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,” saith the wise man, Eccles. vii. 4. 2. The serious observation of the children of men lying thus under trouble, and the far greater part of them utterly destitute of any solid relief against those calamities, under which they groan, will at once affect our hearts with a piercing and heart-melting sorrow for the misery of so many, who partake with us in flesh and blood, and overawe our minds with deep impressions of the holy and just severity of the sovereign God, who has “mercy on whom he will, and hardens whom he will.” This, in the third place, will serve greatly to heighten our admiration of, and wonder at, the sovereignly free mercy and kindness of the glorious God, in providing a solid relief against all those miseries, for some of the race of apostate Adam.

Though every one of those things now mentioned were worthy to be insisted upon, yet because to discourse of the two former, would but increase sorrow, which suits not our present design, we shall fix our thoughts up-

on the third, the goodness of God in relieving a remnant of sinful mankind from those troubles which sin has brought upon them. Now the goodness of God in this cannot be better known than by a serious consideration of that relief, which is the effect of it. And of this the verse now read gives us a fair occasion to discourse. "While we look not at the things that are seen; but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." These words express the means of a Christian's relief, and tell us what it is that supports the believer under all his troubles in this world. And in them we may notice these five things, which require some explication.

1. We have the persons who are relieved, *we*, viz. believers, into whose minds "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." *We*, who travel heavenward through manifold afflictions. Of these it is our apostle speaks, whom he includes with himself in the particle *we*; while *we*, &c.

2. We have the means of their support, that which relieves them, which keeps them from fainting, and makes them exceeding joyful in all their tribulations; and that is "a look at things not seen and eternal; while we look not at things," &c. By which we are to understand the exercise of faith upon things not seen; for the scripture commonly expresses faith thus; so Isa. lxxv. 22 "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Thus also doth the apostle to the Hebrews express it, Heb. xii. 1, 2. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

3. We have the object of this look expressed negatively, "not the things that are seen," that is, it is not any present enjoyment nor sensible objects, that can relieve us against our troubles: but positively, "the things that are not seen," that is, things future, things spiritual, and things no way discernible, save by the eye of faith, which is "the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1.

4. We have the influence or power of this look insinuated in the word *while*, which leads us back to the two foregoing verses: from which we may learn what the efficacy and force of this faith is for the end mentioned; and this we conceive cannot be done with more clearness than by a simple proposal of those effects as they stand connected with their cause, by this word *while* in the context; which will give us a discovery of a threefold notable influence of this faith. 1. It keeps from fainting under trouble. "We faint not," saith the apostle, ver. 16, "we look not at," &c. 2. It makes outward disadvantages turn to inward advantages: decays of the body turn profitable to the spirit. And, in one word, it makes the inward man to grow by the perishing of the outward. "Though our outward man perish," ver. 16. "yet the inward man is renewed day by day; while we look not at the," &c. 3. It makes momentary afflictions work for believers "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not," &c.

The only thing that can with any show of reason be alleged against this interpretation, is taken from the first clause of the 16th verse, viz. "For which cause we faint not," which some may think a sufficient insinuation that the cordial whereby believers are kept from fainting, is rather to be looked for in the preceding verses than in those which follow.

But to this it is easily answered, that the apostle in the preceding verses doth indeed lay down some relieving considerations, which are of no small use to believers under their troubles, and which do preserve against fainting; and to these it is that the clause mentioned has respect; but as true it is, that believers have this advantage from those encouragements then, and then only, when they exercise faith upon things not seen; so that the whole efficacy and power of these encouragements is owing to faith, and this is all we plead.

5. We have an account of the nature both of these things to which faith looks, and to which it looks not; "the things that are seen are temporal," that is, they are only of a short continuance, and serve time; but "the things that are not seen are eternal," that is, they are so either in their nature, or use, or both.

Now though we might from the words, thus shortly explained, take notice of many very considerable observations, yet we shall at present wave them, and only lay before you this one doctrine.

DOCT. That the exercise of faith upon things that are not seen, or faith's looking to things not seen, gives believers a blessed relief under all their troubles.

The rise of this doctrine from the words, as they have been explained, is evident; and if any desire to see this truth confirmed by scripture, they may at their leisure read that 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, where they will see this truth abundantly confirmed.

Now, that we may prepare the way for application in the further prosecution of this truth, we shall,

I. Name some of those things that are not seen, to which faith looks.

II. We shall inquire what it is that faith, seeking to relieve the believer under his troubles, principally notices in those things.

III. We shall inquire in what glass faith sees those things that are not seen, or are in their own nature invisible.

IV. We shall a little open the nature of this look to things not seen.

V. We shall inquire, how it relieves the people of God under their troubles.

Now of each of these we shall discourse in order. And,

I. We shall name a few of these things that are not seen, to which faith looks, and whereby it relieves the people of God under their troubles.

1. Then, faith looks to the invisible God, and by looking at him brings to the believer solid relief under the greatest pressures. The invisible God, as discovered in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose face his glory is seen, as being the image of this "King, eternal, immortal, and invisible," is a never-failing spring of sweet and soul-satisfying consolation. The riches of his love, his unalterable faithfulness, his omnipotent arm, his unsearchable wisdom, his glorious grace and mercy, with all the other glorious properties of his nature, when seen by the eye of faith, are able to give the beholder strong consolation under the greatest pressures. Moses found it so, as we are told by the apostle, Heb. xi. 27. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." This sight of him who is invisible bore upon him, and made him endure, or rather undergo, dangers with courage and resolution; and the like sight is able still to make the people of God endure the worst that can befall them.

2. The believer by faith looks at the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious captain of salvation, and compassionate high-priest of our profession; whom though once his people saw on earth by the eye of sense, yet now they see him no more that way. "Whom though now they see him not, yet believing in him, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And that even when for a season they are "in heaviness through manifold temptations," 1 Pet. i. 8, and 6 verses compared. The Christian should run his whole race, "looking unto Jesus," who is proposed for this very end, I mean the relieving of his people under sufferings, Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. where we are called to view him in his sufferings, and in the issue of them; and that lest we faint in our minds, sweet are the apostle's own words, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Dying Stephen, Acts vii. 55. when he "looked up steadfastly unto heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and his principal relief from faith's sight of the merciful and compassionate Jesus in his state of exaltation. And indeed faith's discovery of the compassion, mercy, kindness, faithfulness, glory, and power of an unseen Christ, is a spring of inconceivably powerful relief.

3. The believer, under trouble, for his own relief, looks at the resurrection of the body, with its blessed concomitants, which at present can be no otherwise seen than by faith, which is "the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for." Sense looks at those clay tabernacles wherein we dwell, and sees them under a daily decay, which occasions fainting; but noble faith looks to the period of time, and sees the dry bones moving one toward another, and every part of the dissolved body taking again its own place, and sees all the ruins of death repaired by a resurrection. It sees "that which was sown in corruption, raised in incorruption: that which was sown in dishonour, raised in glory: that which was sown in weakness, raised in power: that which was sown a natural body, raised a spiritual," 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44. This was Job's relief, he got a joint view of his Redeemer and of his own resurrection, and this, when he was at a very low pass, was very relieving to him, Job xix. 25, 26, 27.

4. Tossed believers for their own relief under their present troubles, do by faith look unto that unseen rest that remains for the people of God, after death has closed their eyes, of which the voice from heaven, Rev. xiv. 13. informed John the beloved disciple; "I heard," says he, "a voice from heaven, saying to me, write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." A threefold blessed rest faith looks at beyond death. 1. There is a sweet, everlasting, and fully satisfactory rest from sin provided for the people of God in Emmanuel's land, where glory dwells: "for there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie," Rev. xxi. 27. 2. There is in reserve for the people of God a blessed and entire rest from all their toils. Duty is no more their toil, but their happiness, though they cease not day nor night, but are continually praising God, yet

they rest from their labours, saith the Spirit, *i. e.* their work is no more laborious, toilsome, or troublesome to them: but, on the contrary, they have in it a sweet and blessed rest; for there shall be there no more pain, Rev. xxi. 4. 3. There is, as the consequence of the two former, a blessed and eternal rest from sorrow, Rev. xxi. 4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Such is the blessed rest which faith looks unto, and sometimes anticipates the possession of, while it gives the believer sweet foretastes of it in the beginnings of sanctification; and in some sweet heaven-resembling enjoyment of God manifested in Christ Jesus, in the ordinances appointed of God for that end. And, in a word, faith assures the believer, that "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to all who trouble his people; but to them that are troubled, rest with himself," 2 Thes. i. 6.

5. Faith is to the believer the evidence of unseen mansions of glory, which Christ has gone to prepare for them in his Father's house. This our apostle in the first verse of the ensuing chapter points out as a blessed relief, not only with respect to presently incumbent troubles, but also with respect to the formidable issue of them, death. "For we know," says he, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What was it that made Abraham undergo cheerfully so many inconveniences, wandering up and down? The apostle answers, Heb. xi. 9, 10. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in the tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

6. To add no more, faith is the evidence to the believer of these unseen rivers of pleasure, which are to be enjoyed at God's right hand. Faith satisfies the believer upon the testimony of that God who is eternal truth, that really there are such rivers of pleasures, Psal. xvi. 11. "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." And furthermore, it gives him a full and blessed assurance, leaning upon the faithful promise of God, that such of the children of men as do put their trust under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty, shall be abundantly satisfied, or, as the first language has it, "watered with the fatness of his house," and he will make them drink of the river of his pleasures—pleasures which issue in great abundance, 1. From the soul-upmaking vision of God, when we shall see him no more darkly as through a glass, but face to face; "Beloved," says the apostle John, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. Now if these dark glimpses of God, which believers do sometimes enjoy, be capable to fill them with joy and pleasure that is "unspeakable and full of glory," what heart can conceive, what tongue can express the joy and satisfaction resulting from this immediate view of God, as he is in the light of glory! 2. Unspeakable pleasures issue from a full and satisfying discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ, with whom believers shall for ever be; as also a full discovery of the glorious work of redemption, with the whole concernment of the glorious Trinity in the contrivance, progress, and consummation of that glorious mas-

ter-piece of divine wisdom, with all the advantageous consequences of it toward themselves. At that day, how will they be ravished to find our Lord's punctual accomplishment of that sweet promise which he makes, John xiv. 20. "At that day ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Now we know but in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known; for when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." 3. A sweet river of pleasure issues from the full conformity of our natures unto God. Most part of our sorrows are the result of the unhappy contrariety of our natures unto God: for the hearts of believers, whose eyes God has enlightened, will be ready to break, through the longing they have to God's commands at all times; and the ardent desire which they have of a conformity to him, as manifesting his holiness in his spotless pure law, that's written in the word, and made visible to the eye of faith in the life of Christ. How sweet was the expectation of this to the Psalmist in that 17th Psalm, 15th verse, "But as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, and when I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." 4. Abundant pleasures do sweetly flow from the pleasant society of all the nations of them that are saved. In heaven it is that believers, who do here come by faith, are brought in a more noble and excellent way unto mount Zion, "and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." These, and the like, are the unseen things whereat faith looks, and by the look relieves and refreshes believers under all their troubles. We are now,

II. To inquire what it is in those unseen things, which faith fixes principally upon, and from which it draws relief and refreshment unto believers. In answer, faith mainly looks at, and observes

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The reality, 2. The excellency, 3. The unchangeableness, 4. The eternity, | } | of these things which are not seen. |
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1. Faith observes in them a great reality. It is "the evidence of things not seen;" it brings in assurance that there are such things, and that they only may justly be said to be. Other things have an imaginary sort of a being; or if any will not allow us to call all the enjoyments of time merely imaginary, yet sure I am they do in so far resemble those things, which have only a being in the imagination, that to us they are of no other use than that which imaginary things do serve. Imaginations give some sort of a pleasing satisfaction, and then vanish, leaving us no more but the melancholy remembrance of an unaccountable sort of pleasure, now lost and gone, and of our own folly, first in looking upon that which really was not, as if it had been; and then in flattering ourselves with expectations of the continuance of those things which are not. Now fain would I know, what there is more to be had by those temporal enjoyments, which are thought to be most real and comparatively valuable, than by these imaginations? Doth the one afford some pleasure? So doth the other. Doth the pleasure of the one quickly vanish? So doth that of the other. And when enjoyments are gone, what in the one case or the other is left us more than melancholy thoughts and reflections, partly for our loss, and partly for our folly, in expecting more than the thing was capable to af-

ford? And may not both the one and the other upon this account justly deserve that epithet, given by the Spirit of God to things of a low account in the world's esteem, 1 Cor. i. 28. even that they are things which are not seen, while, *really to be*, remains, and that most justly, as the peculiar property of these things, and of these only, which are not seen? Thus faith makes the believer to inherit substance, and to look to things that are real; while the rest of the unbelieving world weary themselves in chasing shadows, and feed their deluded eyes with the sight of vain imaginations.

2. Faith observes in those things that are not seen not only a reality, but an excellency. Things that are seen have their use, and deserve their own commendation; but things that are not seen excel, and that, 1. In their nature. Things seen are corruptible, things unseen incorruptible. Things seen are subjected to vanity by reason of sin, not so the things that are not seen. Things seen are earthly or corporeal, that is, they have a particular relation to our estate in this world, where the body and its concerns have the principal sway; but the things that are not seen are spiritual. 2. Things that are not seen excel in their use as well as nature. The things that are seen are but of use to man in some particular circumstances; nay, man sometimes may be so circumstantiated, that all the things that are seen can signify but very little to him. Of what use I pray are all things in the world to a man stepping into eternity, or in the hourly expectation of his dissolution? He can carry nothing hence: for "naked came we to the world, and naked must we" go from it; they cannot, all taken together, preserve from death; for "the soul's redemption is precious, and ceaseth for ever; nor can any man by any means redeem his brother, or himself, nor give to God a ransom that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption," Psal. xlix. 7, 8, 9. Finally, things that are seen are not capable to support, or give any sensible relief as to the present pressure of one in the agonies of death, who is grappling with that great and formidable enemy, the king of terrors: future expectations from them he has none; for now he is to leave them. What he has formerly had from them is now gone, and has left nothing but a melancholy remembrance that once he had treasure, which he now wants, and that consequently he is not only at present in trouble, but this trouble is a fall to him, a change from a better to a worse, and this aggravates his misery. And now being thus destitute of any advantage from what is past, or prospect of what is to come, he has nothing at all, unless he relish some sweetness at present; but this he can by no means do, for now the evil day is come, and the years wherein men are brought to say, "We have no pleasure in them;" for now "desire fails, because man goes to his long home." There is no more taste in all these things than in the white of an egg. But it is quite otherwise with things that are not seen; "Godliness is indeed profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 2 Tim. iv. 8. that is to say, a man exercised to godliness, one who lives by faith, which looks to things that are not seen, finds supplies suited to all his needs, in those promises that are fraught with all things needful for life and godliness. Whatever he needs with respect to time or eternity, he finds it there, though others cannot see it; because it is not to be discerned but by the eye of faith. 3. Faith observes an excellency of power in things not seen. The things that are seen in some cases are nowise useful; and even in those cases wherein they may be of some use, their efficacy and power is but small in respect of that which things which are not seen have. The abundance of things which a man possesses

may alleviate his troubles, but they cannot make him to rejoice in tribulation; this only can be done by faith, which not only kept our apostle from fainting, but filled him with comfort, and made him exceeding joyful in all his tribulations. Nay, we may venture to say, that the efficacy, or power of faith upon things that are not seen, is such, that it can fill the heart with joy under a concurrence of the greatest outward afflictions, while all the things that are seen, are scarce able to alleviate the trouble arising from one, and that a very small outward trouble, the aching of a tooth or a toe. A saint has been seen and heard singing in the midst of the flames by the power of faith, while a king in the midst of a palace, surrounded with all the delights of the sons of men, has been disconsolate, desperate, and capable of no alleviation, far less comfort, and all by the pain of a tooth or a toe. 4. Faith discovers an excellency of glory and of beauty in things that are not seen, insomuch that even those things which a carnal mind would think to be ugly and deformed, yet when looked upon by the eye of faith, are seen to outline the most glorious sparkling and dazzling of those things which are seen by the eye of sense. Faith sees a glory in the cross of Christ that outshines the glory of an earthly crown, sceptre, and kingdom. And if so, how far may we suppose the highest glory of created things to be outshone by that glory which faith will discern in the glorious reward of the cross.

3. Faith looks at the unchangeableness of things that are not seen. Things that are seen run in a perpetual round; and therefore if a man be happy, by their present posture, he must presently be miserable by the change of that. Few hours, far less days, weeks, months or years pass without some remarkable change: and so are they linked together, if not in themselves, yet with respect to us or our comfort in the use of them, that a turn in one makes a heavy change in all: and so sets these things which before seemed to combine for our happiness, as it were in battle-array against us on every hand, leaving us with Job to complain, "That changes and war against us." A man surrounded with pleasures, if but teased with a very ordinary disease of body, a fever, a gout, or gravel, &c. which many times comes surprisingly in a moment, has not only all his comforts embittered by this, but they are now become, as it were, so many tormentors to him, inasmuch as every one of them becomes an aggravation of his misery; and the more pleasures we are deprived of, by that the greater still is the trouble. In a word, things that are seen, are constant in nothing, save in their inconstancy; and therefore surely, all comfort, pleasure, satisfaction, or happiness, that depends upon things perpetually changing, is itself not solid, but a very vanity, that deserves not the name of pleasure, far less of happiness. But now things are quite otherwise on the other hand; things, that are not seen, are unchangeable. God changeth not, "Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Heaven, and in a word, the promises, in which all things are wrapt up, continue ever the same. "They are not yea and nay, but in Christ Jesus, they are all yea, and in him amen," 2 Cor. i. 18, 20.

4. Faith observes with delight the eternity of things that are not seen. "The things that are seen," says our text, "are temporal, but the thing that are not seen are eternal." And indeed this one may very justly be put in the room of all, as it is in our text. For to be temporal is to be (I had almost said, not to be) I say, it is to be imaginary or vanishing, useless, or at most of little use, and to be changeable; whereas, on the other

hand, to be eternal is indeed to be, that is, to be solid, real, useful, excellent and unchangeable. O but here is a noble prospect for faith to look at! Here all things are real, all glorious, all useful, and liable to no alteration for ever. The more he looks at things that are not seen, the more reality doth he observe and find in them; whereas the more he looks at things that are seen, the more vanity and emptiness finds he in them: he looks to things seen, and they mock him: he looks upon them, and they are not, a serious look of them looks them into nothing: but things not seen have in them substance, reality, and solidity, which he with delight beholds. He looks upon things seen, and sees them refuse, loss, and dung; but he sees the things that are not seen to be so excellent, that even these things, which seem to have some glory, have yet no glory, by reason of this glory which doth excel. And to conclude, he looks at the things that are seen, and sees them like a meteor or airy vapour, in a continual motion while they are, and in a little they quite vanish; but things not seen, he perceives fixed, unchangeable, and that for ever; and therefore, "One thing he desires of the Lord, and that he will seek after to obtain, even that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple," Psal. xxvii. 4.

We have showed in some measure, what these unsæen things are, and what it is that faith principally notices in them: our next inquiry is,

III. In what glass doth faith look at them, that it may discern their reality, excellency, and permanency. In answer to which we say,

1. Faith looks at them in their everlasting spring, sovereignly free grace and electing love. It is from this fountain, that all believers' expectations, all their mercies, here or hereafter, flow, Jer. xxxi. 3. "The Lord hath appeared to me of old, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Faith has a back-look as well as a fore-look, it not only sees those things that are to come, in God's revelation of them; but it also in like manner sees those things which have been of old, even from everlasting. And indeed a humbled believer could not believe the reality of any favour tendered unto a vile sinner, such as he knows himself to be, by the holy God, unless he saw it flowing from sovereign grace as the fountain; he could not believe any thing useful unto himself in his present condition, if it were not the product of wonderfully free love, that observes not the desert, but the need of those upon whom it bestows its favours. Again, he could not be persuaded to believe, that he shall have any unchangeable mercies, while he himself changes so often, and very oft to the worst, unless he saw them the product of free, sovereign, and eternal love of him who is God, "and changes not." And this indeed is the true reason, why the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Here is one sweet glass, wherein the believer has indeed a satisfying discovery of the solidity, excellency, and eternal unchangeableness of those things that are not seen.

2. Faith looks at things unseen in their procuring cause, the death of the eternal Son of God, who "neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by his own blood entered once into the most holy place, having obtained eternal redemption," Heb. ix. 12. Here the believer sees the reality of the things which has faith's eyes; for sure the blood of God was not shed for nothing; nay, here it sees their glory and excellency. A wise merchant will not give pearls for trifles, far less the only wise God this precious blood for things of no or small value. Here, if any where, the believer may

see them beyond all rational contradiction, real, great, durable, and eternal.

3. Faith sees, and is satisfied about things not seen by the view it gets of them, their reality and their glory, in that well ordered covenant, which is the mean of their conveyance, Isa. lv. 3. "Incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

4. Faith looks at them in the charter, whereby this conveyance is expressed, and security given as to all things the believer can justly desire, I mean the promises of the written word. God in his wonderful condescension being abundantly willing, that all his people should have strong consolation, has given them full security in the great and precious promises of his word, by which we "are made partakers of the divine nature, and escape the pollution that is in the world through lust." Promises they are, which have in them all things requisite for "the life that now is, and that which is to come." And indeed this is the glass, wherein faith not only discerns things invisible, but also sees these other things, the sovereign grace of God, the meritorious death of the Son of God, and the well ordered covenant, which serve, as we have said, to satisfy the believer as to the reality and glory of the things that are not seen; for none of these things are to be known any other way, than by the revelation God has made of them in his word.

5. Faith discerns the reality and excellency of these things that are not seen, in the foretastes which through grace are obtained here. "For faith is the substance," or as others, the subsistence "of things that are hoped for." It gives an earnest of eternal glory. Faith fetches a cluster of grapes from the Canaan that is above; and not only so, but it breaks them, and squeezes out the juice, sweet, and sap, if I may so speak, in the believer's mouth, whereby he is made not only to see, but even to taste, that the Lord is, and that he is the Lord Jehovah, one that has a being, and gives a being to his promises: and therefore "the soul that trusts in him is blessed," Psal. xxxiv. 8.

6. Faith sees these things that are not seen in the glass of gospel ordinances. Here it is, that "all we with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," as well in what he has promised to, and prepared for his people, as in what he is in his own glorious nature; and hereby "we are transformed into the same glorious image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2. Cor. iii. 18. In these glasses it is that faith beholds, to the unspeakable comfort of believers under all their troubles, the unquestionable reality, the surpassing glory, the unalterable firmness and everlasting continuance of these things that are not seen and are eternal. Unless they be such, they cannot be suitable to the royal bounty of sovereign grace, the vast expense of the blood of God, the solemnity of the everlasting covenant, the firmness of the word and oath of God, who cannot lie, the ravishing sweetness of the first-fruits of glory, and the alluring beauty of the gospel ordinances.

IV. It now remains, that we speak somewhat of the nature of this faith. And in a word, this look is comprehensive of these five things.

1. It necessarily implies knowledge. What we see by the eye of sense, we in some measure know; so likewise we in some measure know what we see by the eye of faith. And hence it is, that in scripture we frequently find faith called knowledge, Isa. liii. 11. "By his knowledge" (that is, by

faith in him, or the knowledge of him) "shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." And of this, no doubt, the apostle also speaks, Phil. iii. 8. and onward.

2. This look implies certainty and assurance. When the eye looks upon things, it assures us that they are, and in some measure also what they are. In like manner also does faith satisfy the believer about things unseen, it shows him their being, and in some measure their nature: for "it is evidence, or demonstration, of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1.

3. This look implies a settling, or fixing of the soul upon these things in the steady contemplation of them; for if we consider the text, we may easily discern, that by this look we are to understand not so much one particular act, as the habitual posture of believers under their sufferings; "while we look," that is, while in the whole course of our sufferings we keep our eye fixed upon "things that are not seen."

4. This look has in it trust, dependance, and expectation. It supposes our acceptance of things unseen for our portion, our trust in them for relief, and our waiting in the expectation of this relief. It is such a look, as that of the lame man, Acts iii. 4, 9. upon whom Peter, fastening his eyes with John, said, "Look on us, and he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." It is the answer of his call, who bids us, "look unto him and be saved," Isa. lxxv. 22. and therefore it necessarily imports dependance and a fiducial expectation of his salvation.

5. It implies, as the result of the former, a sweet complacency and delight in things that are not seen. A soul, wearied under the pressure of troubles, by faith comes unto Jesus, and from him it has a blessed rest. Unbelief shuts out of God's rest, but by faith believers enter into rest, and enjoy a sweet repose in God under all their troubles.

V. We are now come, in the last place, to inquire, How faith looking to things not seen relieves the people of God under trouble? We told you in the entry, that it keeps them from fainting, it furthers sanctification, it increases future glory. We shall now then, in a word, show you three things for answer to the question.

1. How faith keeps believers from fainting.

2. How it furthers their sanctification.

3. How it increases their glory.

1. Faith looking, under troubles, to things not seen, keeps the believer from fainting several ways; of which I shall name a few.

(1.) It turns away the eye from that which occasions fainting. Some weak people, if they look upon themselves, when a surgeon bloods them, will readily faint; but let them turn their eyes elsewhere, and they can easily endure without any inconveniency of that sort: a clear proof, that it is rather our own imaginations about the pain, than the pain itself, that makes us faint. Just so it is with the people of God, when they pore upon their troubles, fix their mind upon them, and, like the church in the Lamentations, remember, that is, roll over in their thoughts, "their affliction and their misery, the wormwood and the gall" of their condition; then like her they must faint, and draw the melancholy conclusion, "My strength and hope is perished from the Lord," Lam. iii. 19, 20. The same practice had the same issue, Psal. lxxvii. 3. I complained (that is, I pored upon my trouble) "and my spirit was overwhelmed." But faith prevents this by turning the eye another way.

(2.) Faith not only turns the eye away from the trouble, but it fixes the

soul on the ravishing glory and beauty of things that are not seen and are eternal. And this is a sweet and ravishing cordial against the trouble that really we feel, as the former was a good preservative against what is merely imaginary, and yet proves many times the heaviest part of the burden. When the church turned her eyes to the mercy of the Lord, she quickly revived from her fainting fit. "This I call to mind, therefore have I hoped." David, when his men spake of stoning him, was sore distressed; but when he turned his eyes unto the Lord, he presently got encouragement.

(3.) It discovers to the soul a fountain of strength, whence it may have abundant supplies to enable it to bear the greatest troubles that can befall the believer; and even this, while yet these supplies are not obtained, may keep the soul from fainting. Faith's assurance, that "in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength," even while we have not the experience of the communications of it, is a cordial against fainting. The Psalmist, for an encouragement against present troubles, brings in this, "the Lord will hear when I call unto him," Psal. iv. 3.

(4.) Faith not only lets see a fountain of strength, but it furnishes the believer with supplies thence. Faith drawn out into waiting brings an increase of strength, Isa. xl. 31. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

2. We are to show how it furthers sanctification. This is one of the fruits of this faith that looks at things unseen, that, while under troubles believers thus look at things unseen, they obtain a growth of their inward man, proportionable unto that decay of their outward man, which their troubles do occasion. Now this increase of sanctification, by the exercise of faith upon things unseen, is many ways promoted.

(1.) Exercise of faith upon things that are not seen and are eternal, renders sin exceeding sinful, by giving clear discoveries thereof. Now we know there is a great progress made toward the destruction of any one, if we once have brought our hearts the length of a vehement hatred against sin. So when sin becomes very hateful unto us, a great progress is made towards its mortification. One view by the eye of faith made Job exceedingly vile in his own eyes: "I have heard of thee," says he, "by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes have seen thee, wherefore I abhor and loath myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xiii. 5, 6. Well then, does Job abhor and loath himself? Then certainly one remarkable advance he has made toward the destruction of proud self. If one view of an invisible God made him loath and abhor himself, surely frequent views would improve his hatred into a downright rage, issuing in the entire destruction of whatever durst oppose the Lord.

(2.) Faith's views of things not seen and eternal, help the soul that believes, unto clear discoveries of the vanity and unsatisfactoriness of the pleasures of sin. Thus Moses's, faith discovering the vanity of those pleasures, made him "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. xi. 25. And certainly when a soul is brought under clear and convincing impressions of the vanity of that pleasure, which sin promises, and so is no more to be gulled or cheated by that pretence, sin has then received a mortal wound, and has its locks cut, which were the principal feat of its strength.

(3.) The exercise of faith upon things that are not seen and are eternal, fills the soul with thoughts about spiritual things. Now hereby sanctifica-

tion is furthered in both its parts; for spiritual life is strengthened, and the habits of grace receive an increase of force by the exercise of grace (it being undoubtedly certain, that exercise, or the multiplication of acts does strengthen habits) mortification is also advanced, while by the vigorous acting of this grace, the soul is filled with a multitude of spiritual thoughts, whereby there is no room, as it were, left for the actings of sin: and thus, while the habits of grace are strengthened by acting, the habits of sin are weakened by not acting. As it is certain, that this exercise of faith promotes spiritual-mindedness, so it is no less certain, that spiritual mindedness strengthens spiritual life, Rom. viii. 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

(4.) The exercise of faith upon things not seen, and particularly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the gospel-discovery of him, has a mighty force to transform the soul of the beholder into his image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." And indeed the glory of the Lord thus seen has in it a manifold efficacy towards the soul's transformation into that blessed image. It has in it the force of a command, of an example, of an argument; nay of many arguments; further, it has a meritorious influence, the influence of an ordinance, nay, and of a special ordinance of God's appointment for this very end. But these things we only name, our present design not allowing us to enlarge any further upon this head.

3. It now remains that we show briefly, how the exercise of faith upon things not seen increases our glory, or "works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Now it furthers our glory in as far as,

(1.) It gives a right unto far more glory than otherwise we could claim; not by meriting more glory, but by interesting us in a twofold promise, in which the Lord of his infinite grace has been pleased to secure his own people upon certain conditions. 1. It gives them an interest in that promise, Matth. xxv. 29. "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." I know that this promise is commonly restricted unto sanctification, as if the intendment were no more but a promise of more grace to such as do improve what they have received. This we willingly grant to be the principal, yet not the only intendment of the promise; for we think that any one who with attention reads that parable of the talents, to which this promise is subjoined, will easily discern, that this also must be understood as a promise of glory granted in proportion to our improvement of grace, or growth in sanctification, which, as we have just now shown, is signally furthered by this exercise of faith we now speak of, and consequently this exercise of faith gives us an interest in that increase of glory, which is promised unto an increase of sanctification. 2. The exercise of faith upon things not seen makes us contentedly forego much for Christ, as we find it made Moses do, Heb. xi. 24. And hereby we come to be interested in that promise, Matth. xix. 29. whereby an hundred fold is secured even in this life, (and if in this life, much more in that which is to come) to such as do quit any thing for Christ. Now the lively exercise of faith makes us quit all for Christ contentedly, and therefore by the tenor of this promise doth undoubtedly interest us in "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

(2.) Faith increases our glory by increasing our capacity. The exercise of faith upon things not seen and eternal widens the soul as it were, and

hereby entitles us unto an increase of glory, for every one shall have what they can hold : "when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." Psal. xvii. 15.

(3.) It heightens their glory by all that additional excellency and sweetness which it will receive from the consideration of past trouble ; for no doubt glory will be double glory to a people come out of great tribulation ; "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet," and consequently every sweet is doubly sweet. Finally, I might add, that this exercise of faith hastens glory, while it ripens us for glory, and even in this respect it may be justly said, to "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The Use. We come now to make some improvement of this truth, and herein we shall have a principal regard unto believers ; but the far greater part of the hearers of the gospel being unquestionably unbelievers, therefore we shall begin with a short address to them.

To you then, O unbelievers, we have a few things to say, which this subject leads us unto, and we beseech you listen unto them as truths, though sad, yet undoubtedly certain, and of high importance unto your souls.

1. Know of a certainty, you have no security against trouble. Trouble you may fall into, for "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward," Job v. 7. and that trouble may be such as may sink you into anguish and deep despair. This alone is terrible, but it is not the worst of your case. For,

2. When trouble comes you have no relief, you have nothing to look at but things that are seen, and they are miserable comforters. For, 1st, All of them taken together are not able to balance a very small trouble. A king upon a throne possessed of all the delights of the sons of men, if seized but with the toothach will find all his enjoyments not able to balance this small trouble. Nay, 2dly, The more ye have of these enjoyments, the more heavy and perplexing will your trouble in some respect be. For the greater the good is, or is apprehended to be, which we are deprived of, or detained from the enjoyment of, the greater will that evil appear to be, which stands in the way of our enjoyment of that good. 3dly, These enjoyments, if ye look to them, will only buoy you up with hopes of relief, till ye are brought unto an extremity, and then they will double your trouble by a sad disappointment, Isa. xx. 5. 6. 4thly, They can yield you no relief or solid satisfaction, because they are liable to perpetual changes, and consequently the only satisfaction resulting from them must be as changeable as they. 5thly, These things give no real communication of strength. Any support they give is by way of argument, and how weak is this to a soul groaning under a heavy and unwielded load of affliction.

3. We say, as things seen will minister no comfort unto you, so things unseen may be justly terrible unto you, because, as ye have just ground to expect vengeance from the unseen God, so whatever stroke he designs you, must of necessity be very terrible ; because, 1. It will be a surprise, as not being seen a-coming. When his hand is lifted up, ye will not, ye cannot see, what is not to be seen but by the eye of faith. 2. As the consequent of the former, there will be no access to provide against it, because not seen. 3. A stroke from this unseen hand may be nearer you than you are aware.

4. When things unseen are terrible unto you, consider that ye have no relief to look for from things either of the one sort or other. Things seen cannot relieve you, as you have heard : and things unseen are your ter-

ror. O! that therefore ye were wise to understand your own interest, so far as to make choice of those things that are not seen and are eternal for your portion, and then you may have a blessed relief under any troubles that may befall you: and with this we leave you, and proceed to the second sort of persons, whom we principally design.

We are now in the second place to speak unto believers; and to you who are such, we have,

1. Some things to offer for your information from the truth formerly opened. Is it so, that the exercise of faith upon things that are not seen and are eternal gives the people of God a blessed relief under all troubles? Then learn hence,

1. The remarkable goodness of God, who, though he sees meet to exercise his people with troubles, yet does not leave them comfortless under trouble, but while in the world they have tribulation, provides peace for them in himself, John xvi. 33.

2. Hence you may learn, that the true reason, why believers are dejected sometimes under their troubles, is, because they turn their eyes off from things that are not seen, and pore upon their trouble, whereby it is increased, as the church found to her sad experience, Lam. iii. 19, 20. "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

3. Hence also you may learn the true way to bear all affliction easily, the same which we have been speaking of, even by the lively exercise of faith on things that are not seen and eternal. This Moses had experience of, Heb. xi. 24. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." "Cast thou thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee."

Now for exhortation. The only remaining use I design of this point is exhortation. Is it so then, that faith is thus relieving to believers under trials? O then, we beseech you, get faith, exercise faith, look unto the things that are not seen. Now that I may set home this exhortation, let me use with you a few motives or arguments inducing to a compliance with this duty. And,

1. Exercise faith upon things not seen, for hereby you shall have the advantage of all the great and precious promises of the word, which are fraught with grace and glory and every good thing; faith gives the use of them all, for when the word is mixed with faith, then it turns profitable unto those who hear it, Heb. iv. 2. "The word, which they heard, did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Faith is like to that juice, or whatever else it is in the stomach, that digests the food, dissolving it, and turning those parts of it, which are suitable unto our bodies, into nourishment for them, sending such and such parts to the respective parts of the body to which they are suited, with which they do incorporate and turn of a piece, thereby adding strength unto the part thus increased. In like manner faith digests the promise, which is the soul's food, 1 Pet. ii. 3. For it is by the milk of the word that believers live. Faith mixes itself with the promise in a way full as mysterious as that, wherein that natural ferment of the stomach mixes itself with the food. And in like manner it, as it were, resolves the promise into its parts,

and turns such parts of it as are suited unto the soul's need into solid and useful nourishment, which incorporates with the soul, if I may so speak, whereby the soul finds a sensible increase of strength, though it can as little account for the way of its conveyance as for that of the conveyance of strength to the body from the stomach's digestion of meat. And indeed it is but little of this that can be understood by any, far less by me, and that little which may be understood is better felt than spoken; but whatever there be as to the manner of the thing, its truth and reality is attested by a cloud of witnesses, and cannot be called in question, and therefore should be a strong inducement to you to get, and vigorously to act that faith, which undoubtedly will put you in the possession of this glorious privilege.

2. By any means get faith, exercise faith, for it will sweeten the bitterest cup you can have put in your hand, by giving you a taste of the sweetness and goodness of things that are not seen and are eternal. For, says the apostle, "it is the substance of things hoped for." The things, you know, that are hoped for, are good, and faith gives them a sort of subsistence or being, as the word signifies, in the soul, and puts the soul in the enjoyment of that which sometimes is so sweet as not only to make the soul forget its sorrow, but even to cast it into a transport of joy. This was that which made the apostle not only joyful, but exceeding joyful in all his tribulations, and even filled with comfort, 2 Cor. vii. 4. A large account of its power this way we have given us by the same apostle in that 5th of the Romans, from the beginning. It fetches the clusters from Eschol in Canaan to believers in their wilderness lot, and breaks the grapes, as it were, in the believer's mouth, whereby the bitter taste of his afflictions is put away. When this strong drink is given unto those who are ready to perish, this wine to those that be of heavy hearts, they do indeed drink, "and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more," Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.

3. O afflicted believers, exercise faith vigorously; for not only will it give you a taste of the sweetness; but also a glorious experience of the power of things that are not seen. It will make you know, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power, yea, and what the working of his mighty power is toward those that do believe," Eph. i. 19. This Moses felt, while it made him endure or bear his afflictions with a strong and courageous mind, as the word imports, Heb. xi. 27. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured," *i. e.* he endured strongly, "as seeing him who is invisible." This also you shall experience, it will make you strong to bear up under your troubles; yea, your need so requiring, it will strengthen you with all the power of his might, whose name is God Almighty.

4. Get, O get, and exercise faith! What benefit shall we have thereby, will ye say? I answer, you shall thereby have an earnest and pledge of the full enjoyment of all those great things which it discovers. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen," it not only is the evidence and demonstration that they are, but also that they are ours, and moreover putting us in possession of a part, as we have heard, it thereby gives us a pledge of the enjoyment of the whole. Thus by faith you shall have a double security, that of an evidence or charter: for faith, as said, gives the advantage of all the promises, which are indeed the saint's charter; and that of an earnest or pledge, faith giving us the enjoyment in some sort of "things that are not seen," for faith is the substance of "things hoped for."

5. Among other advantages innumerable, this is none of the least, which you shall have by faith, which is the evidence of things not seen; thereby you shall have not only a discovery of the reality, but a ravishing representation of their glory and beauty. The eyes of your understanding being hereby enlightened, you will know what the riches of the glory of the saint's inheritance is; it will, as it were, take you to mount Pisgah, and thence give you a view of the Canaan that is above, that land flowing with milk and honey, that land of which it is evidently true, that the inhabitants thereof do not say they are sick, and the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity; the glory whereof seen by the eye of faith made Abraham travel through the land of promise, that was indeed the glory of all lands, and in which he had a special interest as a strange land, making no great account of it, because he looked for a better country, even this heavenly one, which his faith had discovered unto him, as the apostle discourses at large, Heb. xi.

6. Faith not only is the evidence or demonstration of things not seen, and of our interest in them, but it is a demonstration attended with this glorious advantage, that it solves all difficulties or objections that can be started against the reality, usefulness, and glory of things that are not seen. The word rendered *evidence* is in the first language *εὐδειξω*, which imports not only a demonstration of the truth, but such a demonstration as gives a reproof to all contrary objections. Now faith, and faith only, is capable of solving, or reproving all objections against things not seen and eternal. Reason's persuasions of things not seen, either as to their nature or reality, are easily shaken by the power of temptation, as the sad experience of the Lord's people abundantly clears; and the reason of this is, any certainty we have by reason leans upon the strength of arguments, framed by the weak mind of man, which is liable to manifold mistakes in its most seemingly firm and strong reasonings, to which also Satan and our deceitful hearts oppose subtle arguments, which seem to be of equal weight with those whereby the mind is persuaded of the being and reality of things not seen: and whatever can be alleged for those reasons which persuade us of things not seen, and against the contrary objections temptation urgeth, that the like may be said for those objections which it urgeth, and against those arguments whereon the soul's persuasion leans. Are those arguments seemingly clear? Are they such as you do not see what can be answered unto them? Are the several propositions plain in appearance? Is the connexion clear? The temptation will answer, that the like may be said for its objections against things that are eternal. And indeed so subtle many times are those objections, that little can be said against this. Again it is alleged that these objections are framed by the darkened mind of man, that is easily deceived, and that there may be some deceits in them, though the soul cannot see them at present: the like, still may the temptation say, can, with equal reason, be alleged against those arguments which are the ground of our persuasion about things spiritual and not seen. Thus the soul leaning only upon its own ratiocinations about those glorious truths of God, is easily entangled, perplexed, and even put to despair; and despair it would, if faith came not in for its relief: but when faith comes, it silences all objections; for all the objections I know against things spiritual, not seen and eternal, are reducible into four heads, or do arise from four grounds, which I shall mention and show how faith solves them all. 1. Many objections are framed against the truth of things not seen

and eternal, and those objections do arise either from an alleged want of evidence for them, or the strength of reasonings against them, or both: but faith reproveth, solves, and silences all objections of this sort arising from this ground, by fixing upon the faithful word of God, who cannot lie, deceive, or be deceived, which is undoubtedly the greatest evidence; and what we take upon this evidence will not be called in question, nor reasonably can it upon the strongest reasonings framed by any creature, which is both capable of deceiving and being deceived. If any object, that the soul may be attacked by temptation as to the divine original of that word, whereon it builds its faith, and may be put to question, whether it be the word of God whereon it builds its assent? I answer, this is indeed the only thing that can be objected; but yet it is of no weight, because when God speaks to the souls of his people, he can, and doth speak in such a way as to let the soul know, and know most certainly, that it is the Lord who speaketh, that it is the voice of God, and not of man or devils. And the enemies of divine faith are enemies, and injurious not only unto the saints who from their firm experience do attest the truth of this, and to the scriptures, or the Lord speaking in the scriptures, who assures us, that his sheep know his voice, and will not hear, or listen unto the voice of a stranger, John x. 4, 5. but also they are injurious even to reason, which cares not to tell any considerate man, that it is blasphemy to say, that God cannot discover his mind, and speak so to a rational creature, as to make it distinguish his voice from the voice of any creature, while one man may speak so to another, even while he does not see him, as to make the person to whom he speaks, not only sure that it is his voice, but even to make it impossible for him to doubt it. *2dly*, Another set of objections against things spiritual are taken from the incomprehensibility of their nature, and the difficulty of conceiving or entertaining clear apprehensions of them. These objections faith silences, by fixing the soul's eye upon the Lord, his incomprehensible nature and actings, which it will by no means allow us to measure by our finite and weak capacities, which are scarce capable of forming any distinct apprehensions of the most plain and obvious works of providence, far less of those deep things of God. Thus it leads the believer with the great apostle, Rom. xi. 23. to admire what cannot be understood; "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" This, when spoken to the soul by the Lord, and received by faith, will quiet the soul, and scatter all mists which temptation may raise from this airth. *3dly*, Another set of objections against things not seen and eternal, have their rise from the difficulty of finding out means, and the inconceivableness to us of any way how they may be brought about. Many a time can the believer tell us Nicodemus's question urged against things not seen, "How can these things be?" But faith easily silences all doubts of this sort, by taking hold of that short, but significant and powerful answer, Isa. lv. 8, 9. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than yours." One view of the only wise God, of whose understanding there is no searching out, will easily put any temptation arising from this ground to the blush, and quiet the soul in the faith of the undoubted firmness of divine truth, notwithstanding of any difficulty in this

sort. *4thly*, Another, and the last set of objections, have their rise from the difficulties and seeming impossibilities, that are in the way of the accomplishment of what the Lord has promised. Now difficulties of this sort faith easily solves, by looking at the omnipotent arm of God, who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, with whom all things are possible. And to conclude this motive, the only difficulty is to win the length of believing; for faith will remove all other difficulties, though like mountains. O admirable and significant, though short direction, given by our Lord to Jairus in a great perplexity. Mark v. 36. "Be not afraid, only believe." Follow this one direction, O believers, and you cannot think what a weight of trouble it will take off you, and how glorious a victory it will give you over those assaults of temptations of this sort, which otherwise will be crushing.

7. Look to the things that are not seen; for the exercise of faith this way will exceedingly lighten all your afflictions, and thereby make you go easily under that, which otherwise would be a burden too heavy for you to bear. If you ask me, what way does it lighten affliction? I answer, many ways, of which I shall name a few. 1. Whatever our affliction is, unbelief makes it double, by adding a great many false weights unto it, which I cannot stand to name; such was that addition which Jairus's trouble met with, when it told him his daughter was dead; formerly his trouble was heavy, but now, no doubt unbelief put the weight to it, the case is now hopeless, there is no cure for stark dead. Of the like sort also was that additional trouble which unbelief gave Martha, the sister of Lazarus, John xi. 39. while it whispered her in the ear what she again objects to our Lord, that by this time her brother was not only dead, but stinking: as much as she had said, truly the case is past a cure. Now faith lightens trouble by taking off us all those false weights, which make the one half of our trouble. "Fear not, only believe. And said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" 2. It fairly weighs, and puts in the opposite balance all the mercy which is found in our lot, which for the most part will be found to outweigh our trouble. Thus the church found it, Lam. iii. Unbelief made her put her afflictions in the one scale, without putting her mercy in the other, and then the weight of it was like to crush her, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled" (in the margin *is bowed*) "in me." And no doubt she had sunk if faith had not come to her relief, observed the mistake, and put her mercy in the opposite scale, which made her see her affliction was nothing so heavy as she apprehended; as we see ver. 21, 22. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hoped; it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 3. It sinks the weight of afflictions, and makes them lighter, by putting in the opposite scale the provision of strength and comfort, which the Lord has given, and doth give under them. The trouble is heavy, but the support is equal to it; "the Lord suffers us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but with the temptation provides a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. 4. As the former takes almost the whole weight away, by making, as it were, the two scales hang equal, so that which we are to add in the next place, makes that scale, which is opposite to affliction, appear the weightier, while faith lays into it the great advantages which believers do reap by their afflictions. Faith assures them that af

afflictions are means to purge away sin, and make us partakers of God's holiness. And experience confirms this truth, while the soul is made to find, as it is in the context, ver. 16. "That as the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed." 5thly, It puts a weight of glory into the scale; and O! but then the heaviest afflictions appear light, when there is a far more exceeding weight of glory laid in the opposite scale. 6thly, It puts in eternity in the balance with this glory against that time which is in the scale of affliction: and then as the weight of glory makes the soul, think afflictions light, so the length of eternity makes the years of affliction dwindle into a moment. Thus the apostle reckons not only in the verse immediately preceding our text, but also Rom. viii. 18. "For I reckon," says he, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Once more in the 7th place, if yet the affliction be too heavy, faith will rid thee altogether of it, by casting thee and thy burden over on the Lord, Psal. lv. 22. "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

8. Look unto things that are not seen, exercise faith; for this exercise of faith will make you like mount Zion, that can at no time be removed; it will make you steady under all your afflictions. "They that trust in the Lord, shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever," Psal. cxxv. 1. And this it will do, 1, By fixing you upon a steady and unchangeable foundation, even that sure and tried foundation which God has laid in Zion, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." 2dly, It will make you steady, by keeping you from leaning to any thing that is changeable, or liable to be shaken, while it assures you, "that truly in vain is salvation looked for from the hills and multitude of mountains," Jer. iii. 23. And where there is nothing expected, thence, no shaking disappointment can arise. 3dly, Faith makes us draw all our comforts from a fountain that will never fail, while it makes us look only to the Lord, "in whom truly there is salvation for Israel," Jer. iii. 23. "and who has not forsaken them that seek him. The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee, Psal. ix. 10. Once more,

9. As there is nothing will more allay our sorrow upon any loss we sustain in this world, than the serious consideration of our death, that great and remarkable change we are all to undergo; so faith exercised on things not seen will fortify us against all the difficulties that do occur in death, and which are like to occasion any trouble to one seriously viewing the ghastly face of pale death, the king of terrors. There are only four things which I can conceive, that may be terrible unto one seriously exercised about his own death. I shall name them, and show how the exercise of faith fortifies against them all. 1. May such a one think or say, what is beyond time. Heaven and glory, and eternal joys are no doubt preferable to any thing I have in time; but ah! how do I fear, lest all these things be but only imaginations? My misgiving mind suggests, and ever and anon whispers me in the ear, what you now enjoy, you are sure of, but you have but a peradventure for these things, and is not a bird in the hand worth two in the bush? Now against this the exercise of faith doth fortify the believer many ways. 1. What we may doubt of while we take only a glance of it, we will be certified of when we look long and steadily at: so albeit we may

doubt of things not seen, while we have but glanced at them, yet we will be brought and put beyond doubt, by a steady and believing observation. 2. As the exercise of faith in a steady observation will confirm us, so the frequent exercise of faith this way will confirm us. What we see but once we may doubt of, but what we see every day we can by no means doubt of. 3. Many acts of faith do strengthen the habit, and thus it is every day made easier and easier for us to believe while we daily exercise faith; and hence we may with the more ease also get a view of these at any time, when our establishment requires it. 4. The more we look at them, the more we will grow in the knowledge of them; and the more we know of any thing, the more security we have as to its being. 5. The more we exercise faith about them, the more experience we have of the reality and power, and the more we feel, the less we fear: we cannot doubt, when what we have heard with our ears, we have also seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled. From all which considerations it is plain, that as faith is "the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. so the steady and frequent exercise of faith is the way to make those things still the more satisfyingly clear unto our souls, and to free us from all manner of doubt.

2dly, Will such a soul, exercised with thoughts of death, say, I make no doubt of the truth of these things that are not seen: I believe they are, and are really more glorious than those things that are seen: but ah! my fear is, that I have no interest in them. Now against this fear also will the exercise of faith fortify; for, I. Faith, as you have heard, gives a taste of the goodness of those things which are not seen and eternal; and the more tastes ye get, the more fully will you be secure of your interest in them. For foretastes are not only a pledge that they are, but that they are yours. 2. The more you look at them, the more like you will be to them, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And surely conformity to them is one of the best evidences of our interest in them. 3. Faith much exercised grows into that highest stature, the full assurance of faith, and that is what ye would be at. 4. The exercise of faith will lead you to fear the Lord, as it did Noah, Heb. xi. 7, and so put you upon God's secrets; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant," Psal. xxv. 14, the substance whereof, "I will be thy God," is the very thing thou wouldest be at.

3dly, Ah! doth the soul say, I still find a huge difficulty to part with the desirable things which I find so sweet and pleasant to me here, even though it be for things far better, and this makes death still a great difficulty to me. Now the exercise of faith will make this easy also, 1. By keeping us from over-valuing them, the only thing that makes it so hard to part with them: for faith will assure from the word, that they "are vanity and vexation of spirit." 2. Faith by fixing thy soul while here upon things that are not seen, will make thee forget things seen, even while ye are here with them, and thus it will be easy to part with them. 3. It will assure us of a large upmaking for all our losses, and this will make them easy to be borne, when we shall know, that for our loss we shall have double, and so shall be gainers by our losses. 4. The more we look at things that are not seen, the more will our desire after the enjoyment of them be whetted, as it were, and quickened. We will, with Paul, if we look much at Jesus, "have a strong desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far bet-

ter," Philip. i. 23. And this will make parting with that which is far worse easy. 5. To add no more to this head, if any of these things thou now enjoyest, such as may be the society of the saints, who "are the excellent of the earth," be absolutely needful for thee, faith will assure thee, that thou shalt not want it. "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from his people," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

4thly, One difficulty more remains; may the believing soul say, I fear to conflict with the terrors and pains of death. This, I confess, wants not its own difficulty; but faith will do wonders here. 1. It will give such a discovery of the recompense, of reward, as will make you with the apostle, Acts xx. 24. "not count your life dear, that you may finish your course with joy." 2. Faith will bring you unto those who, under the conduct of the great and glorious captain of salvation, have already been made more than conquerors over all their enemies, and particularly over this. By faith it is that we are brought to communion and acquaintance with "the spirits of just men made perfect," many of whom encountered death in its blackest shapes, triumphing over it, "not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection," Heb. xi. 35. 3. Faith will relieve in this case, by giving a sight of him "who has overcome death, and him that has the power of it, who must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet. Now the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death," 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. 4. Faith will show you for your relief death unstinged, have in it pain, and no wrath, and this will put that song of triumph in your mouth, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 5. It will swallow up the thoughts of death in the thoughts of that glory that is to be revealed in you, Rom. viii. 18. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." 6. To add no more to this head, faith will make you with the Psalmist, Psal. xxxi. 5. "Commit your spirit into his hand, who has redeemed you, and is the Lord God of truth;" resting, 1. On his skill and ability, who in respect of both "is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. 2. On his experience who has already conducted many sons to glory, who now upon that account do celebrate his praises, "who redeemed them by his blood and has made them kings and priests unto God," Rev. v. 10. 3. On his care and tenderness, who has undertaken, Isa. x. 11. as to "gather the lambs in his arm," so to carry them in his bosom. 4. On his faithfulness, as knowing in "whom ye have believed, and that he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

This discourse I shall now conclude in two or three short words of direction.

1. Set apart some time daily to converse with, meditate on, and exercise faith about things that are not seen and are eternal.

2. Let all unseen enjoyments lead you unto the unseen fountain whence they flow. Never rest upon any thing you have, without you see God in it; and then be sure you rest not upon the enjoyment, but upon that God who manifests himself by it; for the enjoyment will quickly be gone, but the fountain will remain.

3. Let your occasional thoughts about things not seen and eternal be

many; and this is the best way I know to make up that loss we sustain by the unsteadiness of our minds in meditation about these things.

SERMON VIII.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—2 COR. iv. 18.

BEING unexpectedly called to preach here again, and the tract of God's providence calling us still to look out for what may be relieving under trouble, we have chosen this text once more. I have already opened it unto you: and therefore now, for further clearing of the text, I shall only make two or three short remarks.

1. Things in scripture are said to be unseen upon a threefold account. 1. Because they are in their own nature such, so God is called the "invisible God," Heb. xi. 27. 2. Things in themselves visible are yet reckoned among things unseen, because they are either so in their causes, or in some one or other of their concernments, that is, by the eye of sense we cannot discern their rise or some other either of their properties or defects. Thus the word discovers many things of the visible world, and things in it, to faith, which by sense we cannot learn. And that both as to their rise, and usefulness or unusefulness. Thus by faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God. And upon this account they are reckoned among the things that are not seen, Heb. xi. 3. because in their causes they are unseen: things that are seen not being made of, or by things which do appear. So also faith discovers much of the usefulness in some, and the vanity in other respects, of things that are seen in themselves, which we could never have understood, if the Lord had not revealed them in his word to the faith of his people. Again, 3. In the scripture, some things are said to be unseen, in regard of their distance from us, either in respect of time or place. Thus the departure of the children of Israel, though in itself visible, is yet reckoned among the invisibles, which Joseph saw by faith, Heb. xi. 22. Because it was at such a distance of time from him, that he could no other ways discern it than by faith.

2. Though all these things are the object of faith, yet these only are meant, and to be regarded in the text, which are eternal as well as unseen. However some of these other things may, as seen by the eye of faith, be of some use for the relief of the Lord's people under their trouble, as there are several instances in that 11th chapter to the Hebrews, yet their greatest and main comfort comes from these which are not seen and are eternal.

3. It is to be observed for understanding the words, that not every discovery even of these things is able to give relief under trouble, but that particular sight of them that is got by the exercise of the faith of God's elect. Hence it is, that natural men have no comfort by their knowledge of unseen things.

4. For clearing of the text, I add this one remark more, that while be-

lievers are said not to look unto the things that are seen, we are not to think that the exercise of faith is inconsistent with every look unto things which are seen. What these looks are to things seen, which faith will not allow, we shall hear anon.

This much being added to what we formerly said for clearing the words, they afford ground for the two following doctrines.

DOCT. I. That the exercise of faith upon things that are not seen : or, faith's looking to things not seen and eternal, gives believers a blessed relief under all their troubles.

This truth we have opened and applied already.

DOCT. II. That the exercise of faith upon things not seen, which relieves believers under their trouble, takes them off from, and is inconsistent with a looking unto things that are seen and are temporal.

I need not spend time in proving this truth, it being so clear in the text. I shall only refer you to one scripture, wherein the opposition betwixt our looking to, setting our heart and eye upon things seen and unseen, temporal and eternal, things on earth and things that are above, is clearly expressed, and it is, Col. iii. 1, 2. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (or mind, as the word will bear) on things above, not on things on the earth."

In the further prosecution of this purpose, we shall shortly touch at these three things.

I. We shall show what are these seen things which faith will not allow us to look to.

II. Clear what looks to these things faith will not allow.

III. Show whence this inconsistency doth arise, or how faith takes off from looking unto things that are seen, and are temporal.

I. We begin with the first ; and for clearing what these things are which are called seen and temporal in the text.

First, You may take these generals. 1. By things seen and temporal, we are to understand all those visible enjoyments whereon carnal men dote : all those sensible delights, which by the apostle to the Hebrews are called "the pleasures of sin that are for a season," to which Moses preferred the reproach of Christ and affliction with the people of God, Heb. xi. 25, 26. 2. Even all lawful sensible enjoyments in time are to be ranked amongst those things which are seen, and to which faith will not allow believers to look. It made the patriarchs to sojourn in the land of promise as in a strange land, that is, not to look to it, while they looked for a country and "city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. xi. 9, 10. 3. These things, of whatever sort, which we do enjoy in time, all our present enjoyments are to be accounted things seen. Our temporal possessions of whatever sort are comprehended here. For in the text, things seen and things temporal are all one. 4. By things seen we are to understand not only what we do at present enjoy, but whatever we may have any rational prospect or probability of enjoying in time. For things are such as the people of God in any circumstances may see while here away, and to these things it is that faith will not allow them to look, nor to any probabilities or improbabilities about them.

Second, To be somewhat more particular. 1. Faith will not allow us to look to personal excellencies, endowments either of body or mind. "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let

the mighty man glory in his might," Jer. ix. 3. 2. Of this sort also are comfortable relations; to them faith will not allow us to look, 1 Cor. vii. 29. "But I say brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none: and they that weep, as though they weep not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not," &c. These words contain a plain dissuasive from looking to the most comfortable relations. 3. Faith will not allow us to look to honourable stations. For the account it gives of them is short, but significant. "Mean men are vanity, and great men are a lie," Psal. lxii. 9. This holds true both with respect to the persons themselves, and others who trust in them. And hence it is, that to this discovery of them, there is in the verse immediately preceeding, an exhortation to trust in God, "trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him, for God is a refuge for us, Selah." 4. Faith will not allow us to look to our agreeable accommodations, our houses, our vineyards, and other delightful things, Prov. xxiii. 31. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it gives its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." That is, we are not to look on our enjoyments of this sort, when they are most charming, and promise most satisfaction. 5. Faith will not allow us to look to our temporal securities: for it will tell us, that by none of them can we be secure in the possession of any enjoyment, while we lie still open to that surprising sentence, "thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee." This cancels all bonds, and robs thee at once of all things of time, in spite of the best securities thou canst have. 6. Faith will not allow us to look to comfortable national establishments, which are liable to the like vicissitudes with other things. The Lord puts down one by death, or otherwise, and raises another up, Psal. lxxv. 7. Cities are razed, and their memorials perish with them. Of this, this day we have a sad instance in the fall of our king. But this I leave and proceed to the next general head I proposed.

II. We are to show what looks to these things faith will not allow.

I. Then we say, Faith is inconsistent with a look of dependence upon them. However it allows us to look to lawful enjoyments, and to use them in their own place, and in a just subordination to God, yet where faith is in exercise, it will lead to depend only upon the Lord, and look only unto him with the Psalmist, Psal. lxii. 5. "My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." And this it will do. 1. As to provisions secured to believers by that promise, "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. lxxxiv. 2. As to protection; for from him alone cometh salvation. Psal. lxv. 1.

2. Faith is inconsistent with a look of lust or excessive desire after these things; for faith measures all things by the law and will of God, setting in our view his example, who said, "not my will, but thine will be done;" it was this made Job make a covenant with his eyes.

3. Faith will not allow a look of rest and satisfaction in them; such as was that of the poor rich man in the gospel, who looked upon his stores, and said, "soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," that is, in a word, "take thy rest." This course unbelief takes, but faith will have us to rest only in the Lord, Psal. xxxv. ii. 7. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him, who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

4. Faith is inconsistent with a look of too much love or delight in these things;

for it engageth us to a compliance with that command, Psal. xxxvii. 4. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

5. Faith is inconsistent with a look of vainglory, a look of this sort to a stately palace provoked the holy God to turn the proud eastern monarch to eat grass among the beasts, as we read, in the book of Daniel, iv. This faith will by no means allow, while it engages the believer to glory only in the Lord.

III. In compliance with the method proposed we are to show, whence this inconsistency betwixt the exercise of faith and these looks to things seen proceeds. Now this flows,

1. From the nature of faith, which has in it, 1. An assent unto the promises, Rom. iv. 20. "Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but being strong in faith gave glory to God" by assenting to, or crediting the truth of the promise. 2. It contains in it a renunciation of all things pretending any usefulness unto the same end for which the promises are offered. "Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses, nor will say any more to the works of our own hands, ye are our Gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." This is the language of faith; and here by Ashur and horses are meant all creature-confidences; as by the works of their hands all confidencies in self: faith renounces both, as we see here, Hos. xiv. 3. and also Jer. iii. 24. plainly it makes them look away from all these things which are seen. 3. It has in it a receiving of the things promised, as the only object of our dependance, rest, satisfaction and glorying: It receives Jesus Christ, who is the marrow of all the promises, John i. 12. Now this being the nature of faith, what place is there for looking to those that are seen, when it evidently and necessarily imports and implies in its nature, not only a renunciation of, or turning the eye from them, but also the acceptance of something else in their room, even "things not seen and eternal."

2. This inconsistency flows from the discoveries which faith makes of things that are seen; it makes such discoveries of them, as will not allow the soul to look to them. Faith from the word discovers in things that are seen,

1. Imperfection.

2. Unsuitableness.

1. I say faith discovers a great deal of imperfection "in things that are seen." In the text they are discovered to be temporal, and so liable to a great many changes. 1. They may be turned into nothing, and cease to be. If God look upon them, they are not. 2. Though they cease not to be, yet they may cease to be ours. The world's enjoyments daily shift hands. Riches are a vanity tossed to and fro, and so are all other enjoyments. 3. They are temporal, that is, though they continue to be, and to be ours, yet for a time only may they continue to be to us what they now are. The sweetest enjoyments may become bitter. God can turn our wine into water. A little thing imbittered all Haman's comforts, Esth. v. 13. 4. So far may they change, that they may become our tormentors. A small change in the course of providence will make our comforts our torments. Now the light of faith discovering this imperfection, thereby takes the soul off from them.

2. Faith takes the soul off from them by a discovery of their unsuitableness in many respects unto the believer. 1. As a mortal and dying man they cannot make such a one happy; for by none of them can he

“deliver his soul from death:” for “what man is he that lives, and shall not see death,” &c. Psal. lxxxix. 48. Nor can they support us in death, since they all leave us as soon as we enter the valley of the shadow of death. “Naked came we into the world, and naked must we return,” Job. ii. 21. Far less can they go over to eternity and comfort us there; this their nature will not allow, they being temporal. Again, 2. They are unsuitable to men born to trouble; so far are they from relieving them under trouble, that they are the spring whence most of our troubles flow and arise. 3. They are unsuitable to man as possessed of an immortal soul. Mortal or temporal enjoyments and an immortal soul are no way suited to one another. 4. They are unsuitable unto a spiritual and renewed nature. “They who are risen with Christ should seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God,” Col. iii. 1. 5. They are unsuitable unto the large and vast capacity of the soul of man, that is not to be filled with any, nay nor all the temporal things when taken together. This the book of Ecclesiastes is designed to prove, and proves at length. Finally, they are unsuitable unto the design of man, which is full and complete happiness, which they, upon all the accounts mentioned, are no way able to afford. Now, by these discoveries of imperfection and unsuitableness, doth faith take the soul off from “things that are seen and are temporal.”

3. Faith takes off from these looks unto things that are seen, by its glorious power and efficacy, whereby, 1. It brings into the soul a representation and discovery of unseen things. The soul knows nothing of them, until faith from the word brings life and immortality to light. 2. Faith satisfies the mind about the reality and glory of those unseen things; for “it is the evidence of things not seen,” it demonstrates them to the soul from the word. By a certain sagacity, whereby it knows the voice of God speaking and uttering, as it were, the promises. By this the Thessalonians received the word, “not as the word of man, but as the word of God.” It discerns something in the Revelation of those things in the word transcending all creature-excellences or contrivance. It discovers in the Revelation the very image of the divine perfections, and by these ways satisfies and establishes the soul as to the truth of that Revelation, whereby “things not seen and eternal” are brought to light. 3. It excites love to things not seen, and thereby draws the soul to them; and consequently from things that are seen, “To them that believe Christ is precious,” 1 Pet. ii. 7. 4. It casts the soul into the mould, as it were, of those “things that are not seen,” 2 Cor. iii. 18. “But all we with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 5. It improves occasions for taking us off from things that are seen. When experience had taught the church, “that salvation was in vain expected from hills and the multitude of mountains,” Jer. iii. 23. Faith fails not to take that occasion to draw the soul’s eye off them towards the Lord, in whom is the salvation of Israel, as we see in the close of that verse. 6. And lastly, it influences the whole conversation heaven-ward. The Christian lives, walks and converseth by faith, and this carries his conversation heaven-ward, Philip, iii. 20. “Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.”

For Use. I shall conclude this whole subject in two or three short inferences, from the whole of what has been discoursed. And,

1. We may conclude, That undoubtedly the greater part of those, who are called Christians, are strangers unto this faith, which relieves the people of God under troubles : since it is plain beyond contradiction, that they look in all the ways mentioned unto those things which are seen and temporal. And this is plainly inconsistent with this exercise of faith.

2. We may draw this conclusion, that the world is greatly mistaken, when they think that any alteration in seen things will sink with discouragement, or mar the comfort of the Lord's people. Their comfort we see depends upon things unseen ; and if all be right with them, with respect to these, go the world and all seen things in it as they will, their joy shall run high ? " Though the fig-tree do not blossom, they can rejoice in the Lord." Their comfort, their joy, their relief is neither in kings nor armies, nor any such outward things ; and therefore come of these what will, wicked men are fools to conclude, that the people of God are broken, when any of these things go wrong. Their hope, their strength, their joy, all depends upon invisibles.

3. We may draw this inference from it, that the ungodly world cannot judge, when it is up or down with the people of God. For when they think it is worst with them, that is to say, when visible things go against them, then it is many times best with the people of God. And, on the other hand, when they think it is best with them, that is to say, when visible things favour them, then many times the people of God are in the most comfortless condition. Thus we see the Lord's mercy to his own people, that while they are in a dejected condition, enemies are not allowed to insult, but are made to droop ; and while enemies insult, they are in a case to bear it. Thus also the wise God befools enemies, and they are made to spend their days in vanity, rejoicing when they have no cause for it, and sorrowing when they have as little. But here I conclude the whole, having said more than was at first designed.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON.

P R E F A C E.

THOUGH the gospel of Christ was abundantly confirmed in the first ages of Christianity, by testimonies of every kind, yet I love to see daily and living witnesses arise, and set their seal to the truth and divinity of this Gospel. Every transcript of it in the heart of a Christian is a new argument to confirm it. "Blessed is he that believes, for he has the witness in himself, that Jesus is the Son of God:" and blessed is he that hath wisdom and courage in this unbelieving age, to make this inward testimony appear and shine to the world. This is one reason why I value the memoirs of holy men; and among those which I have seen, I am not ashamed to recommend this as one of the most valuable, and that on these accounts, namely:

I. I found here the inward and experimental work of Christianity described at large, by a wise, a learned, and an ingenuous man, who seems to have been a strict observer of his own spirit, and of all the secret motions of it, and the more secret springs. Here you may see the crooked and perverse workings of a carnal heart in a state of nature; the subtle twinings of the old serpent to keep the soul from God and his Christ; and all the counter-workings of sovereign grace, which in the end appears victorious! You see here the self flattery and many deceits, whereby sinners raise a good esteem of themselves, and build up their vain confidence, in opposition to the holiness of the law, and the grace of the gospel: and here Christians may learn much of the holy skill that is needful to maintain a constant and glorious war with sin, by strength that is in Christ, and they may read the triumph of a dying conqueror.

Now, though every Christian hath some inward sense of divine things, yet every one has not so rich a variety of experiences; and among those that have, few are so watchful as to take a due account of them; few so wise as to judge aright concerning them; and few so faithful and bold as to consign these things to writing for the use of others. Men that are fit to publish their observations of this kind generally imagine, that humility requires to bury them in silence and darkness. But the author and subject of this narrative was a man of great piety, bright natural parts, studious learning, and uncommon penetration and judgment, as sufficiently appears in his other writings; yet there is such a vein of humility and honesty that runs through every page, that you may see the sacred workings of his thoughts, through his holy language. His sins, as well as his graces, lie open to sight, the labours of his soul appear to the eye, and the pious reader will find himself at once delighted and improved. So the curious operations of bees are seen through a hive of glass, and the spectator is at once entertained with instruction and pleasing wonder.

II. Another thing that gave me an esteem of his work, was the account that is given of an evangelical conversion, after the author had been long struggling with sharp convictions of conscience, and labouring under sharp agonies and terrors. He had been fighting with guilt and corrupt nature to attain holiness, pardon, and peace, by all the methods that the reason of

man would naturally suggest, and by the doctrines and duties of the gospel itself, used in a more legal way and manner; and found his labours repeated and vain, and his work still to begin. Here he describes at large the utter insufficiency of all convictions and awakening words and providences, all tears and repentance, all religious duties of worship, public and private, all vows and promises, covenants and bonds, with which he bound his soul to God; and how sin prevailed and triumphed over them all, when they were practised only in a legal manner, as a mere task of conscience, and without the delightful taste of the grace of the gospel. All these left him still under guilt, under the power of sin, and in the utmost confusion, near to despair, till it pleased God to open his eyes to behold the mercy and comfort of the gospel as the way to holiness and peace; till divine grace brought him as a dying sinner, empty of all good, and helpless, to the full salvation that is in Christ, and sweetly constrained him to receive peace and holiness together; till he learned the way of sanctification by faith and hope in a pardoning God, a God reconciling sinners to himself, through Jesus the redeemer. This overwhelmed his soul at once with deep humility and repentance, with wonder and holy joy, with hope and love, and constrained him to pleasant obedience. This renewed his nature, this wrought in him, all the powers and principles of Christian holiness, and raised and supported them in a glorious degree.

Now, though I dare not confine the workings of the blessed Spirit, who is infinitely free and various in his operations, and hath carried thousands to salvation in a more legal way, and doth daily conform his divine workings in many souls to their lower degrees of light and evangelical knowledge, as well as to their natural tempers and their temptations; yet it is my judgment, that such a conversion of sinners as this author experienced, is always more frequent where the Gospel obtains in its purest light, and its divinest glory, and seems to be more akin to the spirit of Christianity.

III. The last thing that I shall mention, that I remark in this work, is the full confirmation that is given to our holy religion, and to this noble method of divine grace, not only in the most watchful and holy life, but also in the most joyful and glorious death of this good man. Death takes off every possible disguise, and makes us think and speak sincerely; and yet you see him still the same. Here we find reason and learning giving their testimony to the gospel, and to the power of godliness, with a living pen and with dying lips.

Though this book may be of great use to all that will read it with an humble and serious temper, yet the persons to whom I would chiefly recommend it, are these, namely—

First, To my younger brethren in the ministry. Perhaps they may learn from these papers, the way of suiting their discourses, in public and in private, with a more happy turn for the relief and salvation of souls. I am persuaded, if we all consulted the workings of the Spirit of God on the hearts of Christians, and the various devices of corrupt nature, and the wiles of Satan as they appear in such memoirs as these, we should learn better how to deal with the consciences of men, in order to their sanctification and comfort, and put the doctrines of the gospel to their proper use. We should all preach the abounding grace of Christ, in order to lead sinners to delight in the law of God, and more effectually direct and draw them to the practice of that “faith that works by love.”

Next, I would recommend it also to those persons that are awakened to a sense of their sin and danger, and are seeking the way of salvation, that they may not run into mistaken methods, nor follow the false and flattering dictates of a mere natural conscience, lest, with their Bibles in their hands, and the gospel on their lips, they seek righteousness and peace “as it were by the works of the law.” Here they will find, that hope is the surest and kindest spring of holiness, and that there is no solid and lasting peace, but what is built on the clear discoveries of forgiving grace; and that faith only can purify the heart.

I would recommend it, in the *third* place, to poor melancholy souls, who walk watchfully and mournfully before God in every duty, and labour in religion, and travel on in heaviness all their days. They dare not indulge their hopes, nor scarce admit any degrees of comfort, because their holiness is so imperfect. Let them learn, from this example, to try whether they would not sooner arrive at great degrees of sanctification, by going farther out of themselves to fetch their comforts, and by letting their hope live on the freest and richest promises of the covenant of grace, wherein repentance and holiness are promised, as well as pardon and happiness. Let them try, whether an humble trust in Christ, as their righteousness and their strength together, would not fill them with powerful constraints of love, and lead them to a sweet delight in every duty; and thus that good word would be fulfilled unto them, “The joy of the Lord shall be your strength.”

I would commend it also to those Christians that have begun to walk with God cheerfully in the ways of his gospel-grace. Here they may be assured, that all the glorious grace of the Gospel will by no means excuse them from daily labour, and care, and watchfulness, from constant and earnest prayer, and universal diligence, in all the duties of godliness: for if these be omitted, sin will prevail, and Satan gain many advantages to bring them back to guilt and bondage again. Sin prevailing will spread a temporary darkness and death over all the vigour and beauty of their religion; but when they are fallen into such degrees of backsliding and decay, they may learn here, that the only way of their recovery, is, by faith and hope in the Gospel; by trusting, as undone sinners, in an all-sufficient Saviour; and their only security all along the road to heaven, is, by joining diligence and dependence together.

May the blessed Spirit, who formed the soul of this author to the divine model of his Gospel, form the heart of every reader by the same perfect rule, and raise them to equal or to higher degrees of faith and holiness; that they may be living witnesses and honours to the name of Christ; and let them join with me to adore my God and Saviour, who, though he hath secluded me from service in his house, by long sickness, yet honours me to stand as a figure on his highway, to direct travellers in the road; and while he restrains my tongue from its delightful work, he is pleased to use me as a silent finger to point to the footsteps of a faithful shepherd, and by them to guide the flock in their way to heaven.

I. WATTS.

Theobalds in Hertfordshire, }
May 1, 1718. }

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON.

MR THOMAS HALYBURTON, Professor of Divinity in the New College at St Andrews, was born in Duplin, in the parish of Aberdalgy, December 25, 1674, of worthy and godly parents, Mr George Halyburton and Margaret Playfair. His father was descended from the family of Pitcur, in the county of Angus, and was minister of Aberdalgy, in the presbytery of Perth, out of which he was summarily ejected by the government, in the year 1662, as well as about three hundred other ministers, without any legal process, simply for nonconformity to prelacy.

Mr George Halyburton, the bishop of Dunkeld, who had been a zealous covenanter, suddenly became so forward for the national defection, and so cruel a persecutor of his former fellow presbyters, that he would not spare him more than others, though he was his near kinsman, but turned him out of his charge. And yet that prelate was scarcely well in the enjoyment of his benefice, when the Lord smote him with sore sickness, of which he died, and went to his place.

Our author's father never repented his faithfulness in adhering to the covenanted work of reformation; but rejoiced that he had been honoured to suffer on that account: and when he fell asleep in the Lord, in the year 1682, in the 55th year of his age, he died in the faith of this, that God would deliver this church from the sore persecution it was then under. His mother was daughter to Mr Andrew Playfair, the first minister of Aberdalgy parish after the reformation from popery; to which her husband succeeded, a little before the restoration of prelacy. She was allied to some of the best families in the kingdom by the mother; but, what was their far greater glory, both of them from their youth were truly religious. His mother excelled many of her sex for knowledge of the principles of religion, and an uncommon memory of the Scriptures: she would have repeated exactly many of the choicest chapters of the Bible. They had a numerous family, no fewer than eleven children, and very sickly. All of them died young, except their eldest daughter Janet; and their son Thomas. But, to sweeten these trials, they had peculiar comfort in the death of their children: some, even of the youngest of them, gave singular evidences of their dying in the Lord.

When his father died, he was happy to be under the care of such a mother. The episcopal persecution for non-conformity daily increasing, she, with her son-in-law and daughter, were forced for their safety to withdraw to Holland, and took him along with them while he was very young. He quickly learned the Dutch, and went to Erasmus' school to learn the

Latin. There they remained till August, 1687, when they returned home, narrowly escaping shipwreck.

At their return he went to school, and afterwards to the university, where he made great proficiency, beyond many of his equals. When he had finished his course there, he entered as chaplain to a noble family, where a person that had been his school-fellow, and had drunk in the principles of the Deists, began to attack him on that subject, which obliged him, in the beginning of his studies, carefully to read that controversy; and what progress he made in this will appear from his book against the Deists. He could not attend lectures of divinity in any of our colleges, while in that family; and though he had read divinity only two years, the presbytery of Kirkaldy importuned him to enter on trials, and he was licensed by them to preach, June 22, 1699. He was settled minister in Ceres parish, May 1, 1700. In 1701, he was married to Janet Watson, a virtuous and pious gentlewoman, daughter to Mr David Watson, an heritor in the parish of St Andrews, a zealous good man, and one that suffered much for nonconformity. Some few years after his settlement at Ceres, his health broke, and his indisposition daily increased, so that he was hardly able to go through his ministerial duties in that large parish.

In April, 1710, having received a patent from her majesty, and an invitation from the presbytery, he was transferred by the synod of Fyfe, to St Andrews, to be Professor of Divinity in the New College.

In September 23, 1712, at seven in the morning, he slept in Jesus: "and him will the Lord bring with him."

He was of low stature; his body but thin and small; his hair black, but his complexion pretty clear and fair.

In April, 1711, a dangerous sickness seized him, which obliged the physicians, at several times, to take from him about forty-four ounces of blood. He recovered, and went about again; but his wasted body never attained the little strength he had before his sickness: shortly after, his arms and legs became a little benumbed and insensible, and also swelled, which at his death increased greatly. But O how noble a spirit, how great a soul, dwelt in his weak and frail body.—He was naturally of a pleasant and agreeable temper. He had an equal and cheerful spirit, which he retained under surprising vicissitudes. This evenness of temper appeared much in his frequent and dangerous sickness. He had a calm, peaceable, healing disposition, and yet bold as a lion in his Master's cause. He had a peculiar talent for reconciling differences. How afflicting the prospect of divisions was to him, the following pages will testify: and had some others been blessed with more of this spirit, his and our fears would have been utterly disappointed. He was master of a considerable share of prudence: he studied to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, as well as them that are within, and to become all things to all men. He was dexterous in observing the tempers of men, and in addressing and managing them. How wisely he carried himself in church-judicatories, of which he was a member, others can witness. He abhorred that unedifying conversation, so common with many, that is spent in frequent and unseasonable jesting and drollery, though he was abundantly facetious in company, when and where he saw it expedient; and in this way he sometimes dropped what tended to edify. Those who conversed with him most will own, they seldom enjoyed his company without deriving some profit. He was often uneasy after much converse with others, if he was not edified himself, or thought

he did not edify others. How circumspect and tender was the strain of his walk in this! He often regretted the difficulty there was to retain integrity in most companies in this degenerate age: he reckoned such company a great hardship; and he was loth to allow any thing offensive in conversation to go without a check.

The following Memoirs will witness how he walked with God in his family and closet. But some things I cannot pass here. It was his custom, except he had been necessarily hindered, to come from his closet to family worship, especially if the Lord had given him enlargement of heart; and if his spirit was in a due frame, he would then have been very uneasy, if any interruption occurred between closet and family duties. He also commonly expounded the word of God, at least once a-day, in his family. The night before family, or national fasts, which he kept, he always directed his servants how to manage that work; and on the fast-days themselves, discoursed to them about their souls, condition and concerns. He was an affectionate and dutiful husband, a conscientious and kind parent, a faithful and easy master. Such as knew him, will acknowledge he had a clear head, a very ready invention, and an uncommon memory. He read little after his health broke, and often acknowledged his greatest improvement was more by thinking than reading. He had a very ready way of expressing his thoughts; he was far from having a vain airy affectation of language in preaching, (a prevailing evil in this time;) he had a studied and even neat, and Scriptural style; and this became natural; though some thought, in the end, his deep thinking made it a little more abstruse than formerly to a popular audience. He had choice pulpit gifts; he was an accurate and pathetic preacher, very textual, close in handling any truth he discoursed on, and, in the application he was home, warm, and searching; and in this he usually showed himself a skilful casuist. He often complained, that some worthy men were too general and bare in the application of their doctrines. He generally wrote his sermons very exactly, when health and business would allow. He used to say, "A lazy minister in his younger years would make a poor old man." It were to be wished, that this example were more followed than it is. He often ventured to preach even at sacraments, under great indisposition, when he was not able to write so much as the heads of his sermon; and he has been singularly assisted, to the conviction of all that heard him. In his last two years he wrote little, his health was so low. His experience of the power of godliness, with his other mentioned gifts, made him very skilful to deal with wounded spirits, according to the variety of their cases; and this conversation he owned was extremely useful to himself. Few ministers have taken a more cautious and confirming way of dealing with people, than he did before he admitted them to the sacrament; and, while in health, he was diligent in the other parts of his ministerial work. He was no less singularly fitted for the schools; he spoke elegant Latin with fluency, though he had been in the disuse of it. He was very expert in the Greek; but his sickness hindered his design to accomplish himself in the rest of the oriental languages. In controversies, especially those of the time, he excelled many. It was strange to see how quickly he would have taken up the state of a controversy, the strength of an adversary, seen through their deceitful sophistry and pretences, and how close and nervous his reasoning usually was.

On the whole, what a loss, especially in that juncture, may we justly

reckon the death of this great man to the poor wrestling church of Scotland, to the place he lived in, and to his family ! Alas ! what shall we say ? What great concern of heart may it cause, when such a green olive-tree, fair and of godly fruit, is cut down ; when such bright stars set, yea, even constellations of them in our day ? May we not justly fear, when such wrestlers with God are taken away, as he on his death-bed comments on such damping providences, that, “ the consumption decreed shall overflow in righteousness ? ”

MEMOIRS
OF THE
REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON.

PART I.

INTRODUCTION.—THE STATE OF MATTERS WITH ME FROM THE TIME OF MY BIRTH, TILL I WAS ABOUT TEN YEARS OF AGE.

THE common occurrences of the life of one in all respects so inconsiderable, are not worth recording; and, if recorded, could be of little use either to myself or others. Therefore it is not my design to waste time or paper with these. But if I can recount the Lord's gracious conduct towards me, the state of matters before and under the Lord's special dealings with me, in a way of conviction, illumination, conversion, consolation, and edification; and present them so as to discover, not only the parts of this work, the several advances it made, the opposition made to it, its victory over the opposition of my own heart, Satan, and the world, but also to present the work in its order and issue, it may be of great use to my own establishment; and if ever it should fall into the hands of any other Christian, it might not be useless, considering, that the work of the Lord in all is, as to the substance, the same and uniform: and "as face answers to face" in a glass, so does one Christian's experience answer another's and both to the word.

This being the design of this narrative, to give some account of the Lord's work with me, and my way with him, so far as I remember it from my birth to this day, I shall proceed to it.

I CAME into this world, not only under the guilt of that offence, whereby many, nay, "all were made sinners," and on account of which "judgment passed upon all men to condemnation;" but, moreover, I brought with me a nature wholly corrupted, a heart "wholly set in me to do evil." Of this the testimony of God in his word satisfies me. And in this I am strongly confirmed by undoubted experience, which fully convinces me, that from the morning of my days, while under the advantage of gospel light, the inspection of godly parents, and not yet corrupted by custom, the imaginations of my heart, and the tenor of my life were "evil, only evil, and that continually."

It cannot be expected, that, at so great a distance, I should remember the particulars of the first three or four years of my life: yet I may on the justest grounds presume, that they were filled up with those sins that cleave to children in their infancy. Many of which are not only evil, as they flow from a poisoned root; "for a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit;"

but do also bear the impress of, and an evident congruity to their corrupt source, and taste strong of that root of bitterness whereon they grow. While we are yet on the breasts, inbred corruption breaks forth; and before we give any tolerable evidence that we are rational, we give full evidence that we are corrupted. We show that we are inclined to evil, by pressing with impatience and eagerness for what is hurtful; and our aversion to good, by refusing with the greatest obstinacy what is fit, proper, and useful to us. At first we are only employed about sensible things; and about them we give the first evidences that our natures are corrupt. And with the first appearances of reason, the corruption of our spirit discovers itself. How early do our actions discover passion, pride, revenge, dissimulation, and sensuality, to be inlaid, as it were, in our very constitution! Any ordinary observer may discern instances innumerable of this sort, very early in children. With these, and the like evils, no doubt, were the first years of my life, of which I remember little, filled up: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child"—"and we go aside as soon as born, speaking lies."

In this first period of my life, I had advantages above most. My parents were eminently religious. I was, for the most part, trained up under their eye and inspection. I continually heard the sound of divine truths ringing in my ears, in their instructions; and I had the beauty of the practice of religion continually presented to mine eyes in their walk. I was by their care kept from ill company that might infect me. By these means, I was restrained, from those grosser outbreakings that children often run into, and habituated to a form of religion, and put upon the performance of such outward duties of religion as my years were capable of. Hence it appears, and I now am fully convinced, that the sin I indulged in during this tract of time, is not to be imputed, either as to inclination or actings, merely to contracted custom, or occasional temptations: but it really was the genuine fruit and result of that lamentable bias with which a man, since the fall, is born. Sure the spring must be within, when, notwithstanding all the care taken to keep me from them, I impetuously went on in sinful courses. The Holy Ghost hedged up my way by precepts, example and discipline; but I broke through all. Surely the springs must be within; and they must be very strong that were able to bear down such powerful fences as were set in its way, by the providence of God, and run with so full a stream, notwithstanding all outward occasions of its increase were, as much as might be, cut off. In this I have a full evidence of a heart naturally estranged from, nay opposite to the Lord: and besides, this deeply aggravates my guilt: "And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early, and teaching them, yet they have not harkened to receive instruction."

The care of my father during his life, which ended October 1682, and of my mother after his death, though very great, did not change, but only hide nature, which is indeed often hid, sometimes overcome, but seldom extinguished. Although I cannot remember all the particulars from the fourth or fifth year of my life, yet so far do I remember what the general bent of my heart was from that time. Upon a review, I must confess, that it was wholly set against the Lord; "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, nor can it indeed be."

To confirm this, when I now survey the decalogue, and, notwithstanding the great distance, review this portion of my time, I do distinctly remem-

ber, and, were it to edification, could condescend upon particular instances of the opposition of my heart to each of its precepts. Whatever influence education may have in moulding what is seen, yet surely "the imaginations of man's heart are evil from his youth up."

True it is, through the influence of the means before mentioned, I did all this while abominate the more gross breaches of all the commands, and dislike open sin. But meanwhile my heart was set upon the less discernible violations of God's holy law. My quarrel was not with sin, but the consequences of it; and the main thing I regarded was the world's opinion of it. Fear of punishment, pride that fears to be ill thought of, or, at best a natural conscience, enlightened by education, were the only springs of my performances of duty, or abstinence from sin. Prone I was all this while to sin, even of all sorts to which that age has a tendency, in secret, when I could say, that "no eye shall see me." They who for credit, or such other inducements, may seem averse to sin, yet will make bold in the dark with the worst sins: "Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, the Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth."

Even those things which in my way seemed good and promising, such as a detestation of gross sins, performance of duties, &c. were either purely the effects of the force of custom, a bribe to a natural conscience to hold its peace, a sacrifice to self, a slavish performance of what I took no delight in, to avoid the whip, or sometimes a charm to keep me from danger, which I thought would befall me, and dreaded much if I neglected prayer. Thus my best things dreadfully increased my guilt, being, like the apples of Sodom, fair to look at, promising while untried, but within, full of ashes and noisome matter. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves?" "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new-moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

Thus the spring of corruption, restrained on the one side, I mean as to open profanity, by the mounds of education, breaks out on the other side in a form of religion, without, nay, plainly opposite to the power of it, which is no less hateful to the holy God. "The prayer of the wicked is sin; his sacrifice is an abomination." Sin, in the one case, has a little varnish, that somewhat hides its deformity from the eyes of men; in the other, it is seen in its native hue and colours. In the one case, it runs under ground; in the other, it openly follows its course. "Some men's sins are open before-hand, going before them unto judgment, and others follow after." Whether the one or the other, the odds is not great: "The tree is known by its fruit." "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Sometimes it may bring forth good-like fruit.

But yet, after all, I must confess, that such was the strength of corruption, that it drove me to several of the more plain and gross sins incident to this age: which, though some account pardonable follies in children, yet the Lord makes another reckoning of them; and some of them have been made bitter to me; such as, lying to avoid punishment, Sabbath-breaking, revenge, hatred of my reprovers, and others of a like nature. Some particular sins committed in childhood, which I had quite forgotten, as being attended with no notable circumstances that could make them be

remembered, rather than any thing else I can remember, were brought fresh to my memory, when the Lord began closely to convince me, and being presented in their native colours, in the light of the Lord, and in all the circumstances of time, place, partners in sin, &c. and were made the matter of my deep humiliation, loathing and self-abhorrence, as not only full of wickedness in themselves, but pregnant evidences of the deepest natural depravity. This made me see to whom it was owing, that I went not to all the heights in wickedness, and the grossest abominations to which ever any were carried; and to which a haughty heart, if not restrained seasonably, partly by secret power, and partly by outward means, would inevitably have carried me: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, deeply rooted, and fastened there." And no thanks to the best, that they are kept from the worst things: "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall." What a monster had I been, if left to myself, and not seasonably restrained by outward means, and inward power. Blessed be the invisible hand, and the outward instruments of this restraint, that kept me back from sinning.

These are but a very few of the innumerable evils that cleaved to me in this sinful period of my life: "For who can understand his errors?" This period was altogether sinful and vain, nay, sin and vanity in the abstract. "Childhood is vanity." And all this is deeply aggravated by my stupid unconcern about them all the while. Notwithstanding of them all, "I was clean in mine own eyes, though not washed from my pollutions," in the mire whereof I had long wallowed. I was whole as to my own sense, though the plague sore ran upon me. While I thought I stood in need of nothing, I was poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See thy way in the valley, know whom thou hast done, &c. I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned."

Reflections on this First Period.

WHEN I consider, how many sins long since done and forgotten, many of them of an older date than any thing else I remember, and in their commission attended with no such remarkable circumstances as can rationally be supposed to have made any deep impression on the memory, and so have any influence in recalling them, after so long oblivion, were now by the Lord brought to mind with unusual distinctness, I cannot but herein observe, 1. What exact notice the holy God takes, and how deeply he resents those things which men generally will scarce allow to be faults, or at most but small ones, pardonable follies rather than sins. God early observed, that man's imaginations are evil from his youth, and will have us remember, and be humbled for the sins that have cleaved to us from our youth: "This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my

voice," is an aggravation of other sins he charges on his people, and in itself one heavy article. 2. How much reason is there for reckoning it as one great part of the wicked's misery, that "they lie down in their graves, with bones full of the sins of youth?" How much reason is there for David's prayer, that God may not "remember against him the sins of his youth?" How just reason have we oft, with Job, to suspect, that in the strokes that fall on us in riper years, God is visiting us for the iniquities of our youth? How much reason have we, with holy Augustine, to confess and mourn over the sins of childhood, and trace original corruption, in its first outbreakings, even up to infancy? 3. I here observe what an exact register conscience, God's deputy, keeps; how early it begins to mark; how accurate it is, even when it seems to take no notice: and to what a length it will go in justifying God's severity against sinners at the last day; how distinctly and clearly it will read it out, and how far up it will fetch its accounts of those evils which we mind nothing of, when God shall open its eyes to read what is written, and discern those prints which, as Job says, "God sets upon the heels of our feet," and gives it a commission to tell us of them, when the "books shall be opened, and the dead, small and great, shall be judged out of them."

When I review this first period of my life, what reason do I see to be ashamed, and even confounded, to think that I have spent ten years of a short life, without almost a rational thought, and undoubtedly any that was not sinful: "After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

The whole of what I have set down before, being matter of undoubted experience, of which I can no more doubt than of what I now see and feel, I have herein a strong confirmation of my faith, as to the guilt of Adam's sin, its imputation to his posterity, and of my concern therein in particular. For, 1. The bent of my soul, from a child, was set against the Lord: nor was this the effect of custom and education; for there was a sweet conspiracy of precept, discipline, and example, in those with whom I conversed, during this part of my life, to carry me another way. Nor can I charge the fault of this on my constitution of body, or any such thing, as might be alleged to proceed from my parents in a natural way. For those lusts which are "of the mind," and are not influenced by any constitution of body, were as strong, sensible, active, and prevalent, as any other, nay, more than those which may be pretended to depend on the frame of the body. And as my soul, in its accursed inclinations, was thus opposite to the Lord, so the opposition was of that strength and force, as was not to be suppressed, much less to be overcome and subdued, by the utmost care of parents, and the best outward means. This is undoubted fact. 2. I cannot at all conceive it consistent with the wisdom, goodness, or equity of God, to send me thus into the world, without any fault on my part. To say I was thus originally framed without respect to any sin chargeable on me, is a position so entirely contrary to all the notions I can entertain of the Deity, that I cannot think of it without horror, much less can I believe and give assent to it. 3. Penal, then, this corruption must be, as death and diseases are. And of what can it be a punishment, if not of Adam's sin? While those things are so plain in fact, and the deduction from them so easy, whatever subtle arguments any may use to overthrow this truth, I have no reason to be much shaken or moved with them, or call the truth in question. If once I am sure, that God has done a thing, there is no

room left for disputing its equity. I am sure, I was corrupt from my infancy. I am sure, God could not have made me so without a cause, or sent me into the world in such a case, if it had not been for some fault wherein I am concerned. If there is any attempt to charge God on this account, I look upon it as highly injurious. There is nothing left for me in this case, but humbly to endeavour to clear God of any seeming hardship. If we cannot easily do this, then I will much rather acknowledge my ignorance, and stoop under his incomprehensibility, than lay any charge of injustice against him. This has upheld my soul against the most subtle arguings of men of perverse minds, and even of Satan, who hath oft assaulted me in this matter. Be their arguments what they will, "Behold, in this they are not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth none account of his matters. That he may withdraw man from this, (among other evil purposes, of measuring God by his short line) and hide pride from his eye."

Hence, also, I am taught what estimate to make of the pretendedly good and virtuous inclinations with which some are, by Deists and Pelagians, alleged to be born. If it be not in those few and rare instances of the early efficacy of sanctifying grace, all that which is looked on as good is really no more but the fruit of education, custom, occasional restraints, freedom from temptation, or perhaps a natural temper, influenced by some of those, and by the constitution of the body, to somewhat of opposition to those grosser actings of sin, which make the most noise in the world. In a word, whatever there is of this, except in the rare instances before mentioned, is but sin under a disguise. The difference is not great. The one sort of sinners seem to promise good fruit, but deceive; whereas the openly profane give a plain refusal, and forbid expectations. And yet of this last sort, more receive the gospel than of the former: "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, the first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

PART II.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE, PROGRESS, INTERRUPTIONS, REVIVALS, AND ISSUES, OF THE LORD'S STRIVINGS WITH ME, DURING THE TEN OR ELEVEN ENSUING YEARS OF MY LIFE, FROM MAY, 1685, TO AUGUST, 1696.

CHAPTER I.

An Account of the first rise of my Concern about Religion, its results, revivals, and other occurrences relating thereto, for the first two years of this time.

IN the month of May 1685, my mother being, by the heat of the persecution, obliged to retire to Holland, I went along with her. While we

were at sea, being in some real or apprehended danger, my conscience, which had for all the bye-past ten years, so far as I can now remember, been fast asleep, began to awaken. I was convinced of sin, terrified with the apprehensions of hell and death, and the wrath of God, which, before I was brought to this distress, I had no thought about: "They have turned their back unto me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble, they shall say, Arise, and save us."

All this concern was nothing more, than a sad mixture of natural fear, and a selfish desire of preservation from the danger that was, at least by me, supposed imminent. Peace, acceptance, communion with God, came not much into my thoughts. I was afraid and unwilling to die. I would gladly have been out of danger of hell. This was all my exercise at this time. It was not sin, but death, its consequence, I was concerned to be rid of: "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, I have sinned against the Lord your God. Now, therefore, I pray thee, forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only."

As this exercise was wholly selfish, without any concern for the Lord's glory, so it led me to selfish courses for relief. I promised, that, were I at land, I would live and be better than formerly: I engaged to keep all God's commands. My mother told me, I was in a mistake, and would not hold there. But of this, there was no persuading one so ignorant of his own heart, as I at this time was. I multiplied engagements, and doubted not myself as to the performance: "And the people answered, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the Lord."

No sooner was I come to land, and fixed at Rotterdam, than I verified what had been foretold. I forgot all my promises and resolutions. The unrenewed and corrupt heart being free from the restraint put upon it by the natural conscience, under appearance of hazard, took its old course. I returned to former evils, and grew worse. Corruption, that had been confined for a little, having easily forced down all these mounds raised to hold it in, ran with the greater violence. It is true, through the mercy of God, I was still restrained from open scandalous sins; towards which the awe of my godly and prudent mother, and the principles of education, contributed not a little. But as to secret evils of all sorts, I had no aversion to them; nay, to many of them I was strongly inclined, and in many instances followed my own inclinations. I was a ready and easy prey to every temptation, notwithstanding all my engagements: "And thou saidest, I will not transgress, when upon every high hill, and under every green tree, thou wanderest, playing the harlot."

My sins, in this place, had this grievous aggravation, that they were against greater light, and more of the means of grace, than I had formerly enjoyed. On the Lord's day, we had three sermons and two lectures in the Scots church; on Thursday, a sermon there likewise. On Tuesday, one of the suffering ministers by turns preached. There was a meeting for prayer on Wednesday. On Monday and Friday nights, Mr James Kirkton commonly lectured in his family. On Saturday, he catechised the children of the Scottish sufferers who came to him. My mother took care to make me attend most of these occasions; was careful to keep me to duty, was not wanting in advice, correction, prayer with and for me; she obliged

me to read the Scriptures and other edifying books. But so far were all these from having a due effect on me, that I was weary of them, and went on in sin: "What could have been done more, (namely, in point of outward means,) to my vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore, when I looked that it should have brought forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Ye said also, (namely, of the Lord's service) What a weariness is in it? And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts? And ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye have brought an offering. Should I accept this of your hand, saith the Lord?"

At this time, I wanted not frequent convictions, occasioned sometimes by the preaching of the word, and at other seasons by the light of my education, which still adhered to me, and was a check upon me. But all these were only like the starts of a sleeping man, occasioned by some sudden noise: up he gets, but presently he is down, and faster asleep than before. I found means to get rid of these convictions. 1. I would, when they were uneasy, promise them a hearing afterwards: "And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way, and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." 2. At other seasons, I looked to the tendency of them, that they aimed at engaging me to be holy, and then I pored upon the difficulties of that course, till I not only got the edge of my convictions blunted, but frightened myself from a compliance: "The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the streets." 3. When convictions were lighter, I got rid of them by withdrawing from the means: "If a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." 4. Sometimes I promised them fair, and so put them off at that time, but minded it not afterward: "And he said to the second likewise, and he answered, I go, Sir, and went not." 5. Sometimes they issued in fruitless, inactive, and slothful wishes: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing. The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour." 6. At other times, when they were troublesome, I turned mine eye to something which I thought good in my conduct, though, the Lord knows, little was there that had so much as any tolerable appearance of good. Yet so foolish was I, that I rested here, as if this had not been only enough to atone for the past, but to procure good at God's hand: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican," &c. 7. Sometimes I endeavoured to diminish my sin as much as I could: "In all my labours, they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin." 8. When these shifts failed, and they were still uneasy, I then betook myself to diversions, and they choked the word and convictions arising from it: "And that which fell among the thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

About this time, I met with some things that crossed me. Upon which I turned thoughtful, how to rid myself of these difficulties. I seemed more than ordinary concerned, and my spirit was much troubled; yet really this strait led me not to God. But my thoughts were spent in resentments against the real or supposed authors of my uneasiness, in proud, selfish,

and vain contrivances, for mine own ease and relief: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.—They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty; but none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?—And thou didst look in that day, to the armour of the house of the forest, &c. But ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect to him that fashioned it long ago."

About the month of December 1686, at the earnest desire of my father's sister, who was married to John Glass, provost of Perth, I was sent home. While I staid in his family, I saw nothing of religion, though my aunt was a very moral woman. Here I was much indulged. I got liberty, and I took it. I saw little of the worship of God, and I easily complied, and turned remiss too. What further advances toward an open rejection of the very form of religion I made in this place, I do not now, at this distance, distinctly remember; but no doubt they were great. This I do remember, that I found my aversion to these sins, which, through the influence of education, I abominated before, sensibly weakened. Yea, I found some secret hankering after some of them, a delight in those who were guilty, and a sort of approbation of them in my heart. Yet still I was, in a great measure, restrained from an avowed practical compliance, by the awful impressions early instruction had left on my mind, which were not as yet wholly worn off; though they were far decayed, considering the shortness of my stay, by which I may easily discern what had become of them, if I had stayed longer there. Further, I remember, that at that time, I had a great aversion to learning, which was the only good thing that in this place was urged on me. I looked on it as a burden and drudgery, to which the basest employments were to be preferred, and hence I in no way set my heart to it; but trifled away my time. And many a sinful shift did I betake myself to, that I might get the time shuffled over: "Thus I hated instruction, and cast God's word behind my back. When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

Thus I spent the winter. In the spring of 1687, my mother fearing that I might be ensnared with the company I was now amongst, came home for me, as remembering the wise man's observation, "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame." But so great was my wickedness, that, in spite of natural affection, I was grieved at her return; it damped me when first I heard her voice, and I cared not to see her. Nothing I disliked more than a godly and affectionate mother's converse. I feared to be questioned as to my past conduct. I feared she would carry me away back to Holland, where I would be put under uneasy restraints from my sinful liberty. "But thou saidst, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."

In the spring, or towards summer, my mother carried me with her, much against my will, and put me to Erasmus' school. I staid but a short while there. But by the advantageous method of teaching taken with me, I began to delight in learning, and quickly turned proud of my success. But otherwise, I lived as I had done before, becoming still worse and worse, under all the means God made use of to bring me near, and keep me close to him: "As the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah;

that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory : but they would not hear.”

CHAPTER II.

An Account of the revival of convictions, their effects, progress, issues, and interruptions, from the close of 1687 to 1690, or 1691, when I went from Perth to stay at Edinburgh.

IN the month of February, 1687, King James issued his proclamations for indulgence, after which most of those who had fled ventured home ; and my mother amongst others, toward August or September that year. It had been for my advantage, probably, for my education, to have staid here, which made me unwilling to return. In our return, we were in imminent danger of shipwreck, on the seas of England ; but by the mercy of God we escaped. The danger was sudden, and suddenly over, and so left little or no impression on me. When we came home, we fixed our residence at Perth, and abode there till harvest 1690, or 1691, I cannot be positive which. What was my state as to my soul's concerns during this time, so far as I remember, I shall here narrate.

Presently upon our settlement in this place, I was entered to school, and made some better proficiency than before. But as to religion, I continued as unconcerned as ever, as intent upon sin, as averse to duty as formerly. However, I behaved under my mother's eye, but, when I was among my comrades I took my liberty, and went with them into all the follies and extravagances they went into ; with this aggravation above most of them, that what I did I very often knew to be a fault ; whereas they, at least many of them, did not. Yea, I not only went along with them, but was foremost, and enticed others to folly. Yet still, through the mercy of God, I kept from openly scandalous evils, save once, that I remember, I was seized in a garden, with some other boys, taking some fruit. Of this I was much ashamed, and never attempted the like again, not from any real dislike of the sin, but the fears of a discovery. And thus I continued, till towards the close of King James' reign, when fears of a massacre, or some sudden stroke from the Papists, of which there was a great noise every where, revived my concern about religion : “ But when he slew them, then they sought him ; and they returned and inquired early after God : and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer.”

This concern being somewhat deeper, and the effects of it more remarkable and lasting, I shall endeavour to give a distinct account of it. About this time, the Lord, by the means I lived under, the preaching of the word, catechising in public and private, enlightened my mind further in the notional knowledge of the law and gospel. My capacity growing with my years, and knowledge of what was sin, and what was duty, and what the fearful consequences of sin were, and the advantage of duty increasing ; sin was left open and naked without the excuse of ignorance, and conscience had a farther advantage, being armed with more knowledge, and better informed ; by which its checks, when now by the Lord's providences

it was in some measure awakened, were more frequent and sharp, and not so easily to be evaded: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."

Some touches of sickness rivetted on me the impressions of mortality and frailty, and the tendency of each of that numerous train of diseases, by which we are daily exposed to death: in which I was brought into, and kept under continual "bondage through fear of death."

But that which, above all, most deeply affected me, and gave an edge to convictions, was the continual fear we were in, of being suddenly destroyed by the Papists. This kept death, in its most terrible shape, ever in my eyes and thoughts; and, to my great terror, I saw wrath and judgment following it. "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites: Who amongst us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

By this I was cast into grievous disquietude: "I took counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily." I was in a dreadful strait betwixt two. On the one hand my convictions of sin were sharp, fears of a present death and judgment quickened them. This made me attend more to the word; and the more I attended to it, they increased the more; and I was daily persuaded, more and more, that there was no way to be rid of them, but by turning religious. On the other hand, if I should engage in earnest in religion, then I saw the hazard of suffering for it, and wist not but I might be called immediately to die for it; and this I could not think of doing. Betwixt the two, I was dreadfully distressed in my mind; some nights sleep went from mine eyes, and I was full of trouble. I set my imagination to work, and sometimes strongly impressed myself with the fancy of an Irish cut-throat, holding a dagger to my breast, and offering me these terms, "Quit your religion, turn Papist, and you shall live: Hold it, and you are dead." The imagination was sometimes so strong, that I have almost fainted with it, and still I was dreadfully unresolved what to do; sometimes I would let him give the fatal stroke; but on this my spirits shrunk, and my heart failed at the apprehension of death. At other times I resolved to quit my religion, but with a resolution to take it up again, when the danger was over; but here I could get no rest. What, thought I, if the treacherous enemy destroy me after I have done it, and thus I lose both life and religion? And what if I die before the danger is over, and so time be not allowed me to repent? "Ephraim is as a silly dove, without a heart: they call to Egypt, and they go to Assyria."

This sort of exercise frequently recurred, and I ever continued in this way at times, till after the battle of Killiecrankie, which was fought July 27, 1689. It had some interruptions, and then I was as remiss as before; but for near a year, few weeks, and frequently few days or nights, passed over me, without some such exercise: but the fears of the Papists being quickly over, my remaining difficulty was only with my convictions. Now, as to these, I endeavoured to relieve myself: 1. By promises of abstaining from those sins which were most directly contrary to my knowledge, and of which I was most plainly convinced, "And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord for me, and I will let the people go." 2. I took sanctuary in resolutions of inquiring into the Lord's mind, and complying with it. But when I consulted any practical book, or the ministry of the word, and found them not to give such directions as agreed with my unrenewed heart, I was grieved, and stuck there: "And, behold,

one came to him, and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." 3. I thought to find peace in a more careful attendance upon duties: "Thus being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish mine own righteousness, I submitted not myself unto the righteousness of God, (nor showed I any regard to Christ,) who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

Though my foolish heart ran to those courses, yet really they afforded no solid repose: For, 1. The first sin against light, and the first omission of duty, which very speedily ensued upon the intermission of the restraint that present conviction put on me, shook all. And I was confounded at the thought of appearing before God, in a righteousness so plainly ragged, that where it had one piece, it wanted two. 2. Though these ways gave some ease, while trials were at a distance; yet when the thoughts of death came near, I found no quiet in them. This was not gold tried in the fire, nor would it abide so much as a nearhand view of a trial; but at the very appearance of a storm, this sandy foundation shook. 3. Whenever convictions were awakened as to new sins, convictions for old ones also recurred, which showed that the cure was not perfect.* "Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

The effects of this exercise that remained and increased afterwards, were principally these three. 1. I was brought into a doubt about the truths of religion, the being of a God, and things eternal. This hesitation was not from any arguments that offered themselves against these truths; or from any suspicion of ministers, parents, or others, from whom I had received them; but merely from this, that whenever, in danger or straits, I would build on them, a suspicion secretly haunted me, What if the things are not? Whence I was brought to think, that I had not certainty and evidence about them, answerable to the weight that was to be laid on them. I thought death, and the trouble attending it, were certain and sensible things; but I could not get my mind so satisfied, and fully assured upon the truths of religion. Still, when under apprehensions of death, I would have taken rest in the truths of religion, the persuasion failed me, and my mind began to waver; though I could give no reason of this: "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." 2. I was hereby persuaded, and this persuasion ever after increased in strength, that I could never have peace, till I came to another sort of evidence and certainty about the truths of religion, than I was yet acquainted with. Death I saw inevitable, it might be very sudden, I was capable of being impressed with the forethoughts of it, and could not banish them. Therefore, concluded I, unless I obtain such a conviction of religion, and such an interest in it, as will make me not only look at death without fear but go through it with comfort, "better for me I had never been born;" but how or where this was to be obtained, I was utterly uncertain. Here I lay in great perplexity, under the melancholy impression, that I had hitherto

* Consider Heb. x. 2, 3. Where conscience of sin remains after the use of means, it argues their weakness.

“spent my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which profiteth not.” 3. This perplexity was somewhat relieved, while one day or other reading in the close of the Fulfilling of the Scriptures, how Mr Robert Bruce was shaken about the being of a God, and how at length he came to the fullest satisfaction ; by which a hope secretly sprung up, that one time or other, and in one way or other, the light might befall me, and that the Lord might satisfy me in this. Here was the dawning of a light, that, though for long it did not fully clear up ; yet was never put wholly out again ; though it was far from satisfying, yet it kept me from despair, as to the issue : “ And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town ; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands on him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking.” But, notwithstanding all this, “ the veil still remained untaken away.”

About this time, one Mr Donaldson, a reverend old minister, preached at Perth, and coming to visit my mother, he called for me ; and, among other questions, he asked me if I sought a blessing on my learning ? To which I ingenuously answered, No. He replied with an austere look, “ Sirrah, unsanctified learning has done much mischief to the kirk of God.” This saying stuck to me ever after, and left a deep impression on me ; so that whenever I was any way straitened, I applied to God by prayer, for help in my learning, and pardon for not seeking his blessing. But this was only when more than ordinarily diffculted.

But as to my general disposition, all this exercise left me where I was before, afar off from God, and “ an enemy to him in my mind,” which I evidenced “ by wicked works.”

CHAPTER III.

An Account of the increase of my convictions, during my stay at Edinburgh, from harvest, 1690, or 1691, till May, 1693, and the vain refuges to which I betook myself for relief.

MY mother designing to have me well educated, for the advantage of better schools, she removed to Edinburgh, in harvest 1690, or 1691, and fixed me at Mr Gavin Weir’s school, where I staid (except only for the space of some months that I abode in Carlop’s family, and was educated with his children and some others, by one who had been an under teacher to Mr Weir, and after his removal taught a few privately) till November, 1692, when I entered the College, under Mr Alexander Cunningham. Here it was my mercy, that I became acquainted with sober comrades, and bookishly inclined. But this it is not my design to narrate ; and therefore I proceed to observe the steps of the Lord’s work with me as to my soul.

While I abode here, the Lord gave not over his dealings with me : “ About the time of forty years, suffered he their manners in the wilderness.” Long also did he bear with my manners. In this place the work went on. For, 1. As knowledge increased, so convictions increased, if not in force, yet in number ; still, as knowledge of the law grew, which it daily did under the means of grace, the knowledge of sin also grew : “ For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The Lord daily let me see, that he was wroth on account of sins that formerly I had not noticed : “ These

things thou hast done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest I was such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee." 2. By new afflictions, the impressions of my mortality were riveted, and I was still the further in bondage, through the growing fears of death. 3. The word being daily preached, and daily meeting with me, forced me, though unwilling, to make some inquiry into my sincerity in religion, of which I now made some profession. A close word will at length even bring a Judas to say, "Master, is it I?" 4. The means of grace, to save some bosom-idols, engaged me, like Herod, "To do many things, and hear the word gladly."

The means by which these effects were wrought, were, 1. The preaching of the word, "By the two-edged sword that goes out of his mouth" the Lord did oft wound me, and the secrets of my heart were made manifest. I found "the word a discernor of the thoughts of the heart and its intents." 2. The Lord made use of the rod. He laid his hand on me. When I was well and in health, the word did not affect me so much, nor did I attend to it so carefully. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou wouldst not hear: This has been thy manner from thy youth, and thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord." In their affliction they will seek me early. "If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then he showeth unto them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded." 3. I read Shepherd's Treatise, called *The Sincere Convert*, which galled me, and cut me to the quick: it came very close home to me, and affected me very much, and put me to question deeply my sincerity.

By these means, I was driven sometimes to great extremity, and carried the length of a form of religion. I prayed, not only evening and morning, but at some other times retired, and would weep plentifully in secret, and read, and prayed, and resolved to live otherwise than I had done. "But this goodness was as the morning cloud, and the early dew." It kept pace with my convictions. It was force, not nature; and this strictness lasted no longer than the force that occasioned it did. "And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days of Jehoiada the priest.—But Jehoiada waxed old, and died.—Now, after the death of Jehoiada, came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king; and the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols."

While I was under these distresses, many a wicked shift did I betake myself to for relief, though without effect: "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent unto King Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." When searching marks were offered from the word, which tended to discover my naughtiness, or when I read them in books; 1. If any thing was spoken or mentioned, that did in appearance make for me, then I greedily caught at that; for I was very unwilling to see my own hypocrisy, and therefore, if I had but a show to found my claim, I laid hold on what was offered, like the young man, when Christ spoke of keeping the commandments, he answered, being unacquainted with the spiritual extent of the law, "All these things have I kept from my youth, what lack I yet?" So said I. 2. When I found something required, that I neither had, nor resolved to comply with, because perhaps it was on some account or other dear, then I resolved to compound the matter, and make anends some other

way, and beg a license for that, like Naaman: "Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice, unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself down in the house of Rimmon." 3. When any mark was offered, that I could not evade, nor pretend to, then I was ready to question, whether he that offered it were not mistaken, "and secretly questioned the truth:" following the measures Satan took with Eve. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden." And again, "Ye shall not surely die." 4. When I could not see, not through the want of sufficient light, but through my unwillingness to admit it, I was ready to quarrel that ministers and books did not tell me plainly: "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt. If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not." 5. Sometimes, when I was gravelled with a mark, I promised it a hearing at a more convenient season; and thus, like Felix, shifted the trouble for the time. 6. Sometimes I would slip over these things that made against me. "He that doth evil, cometh not to the light, because his deeds are evil, lest they should be reprov'd." 7. I carefully sought for the lowest marks, and the least degrees of grace that might be saving. I wanted only as much religion as would take me to heaven; and therefore I still inquired, with the young man, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" I desired no more than would do this, serve this turn: and any thing that would serve this, provided my beloved lusts were spared, I would with him resolve upon. 8. When none of these shifts would avail in the general, I would resolve upon doing any thing that the Lord required, like him that said, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But then, with him, I still retracted when the Lord told me, as he often did, of particulars he would try me in, which were contrary to my inclination. 9. When I saw I behoved to quit these of which the Lord often convinced me, then I begged a little respite or delay, and I would comply; "Augustin-like, I was content to be holy, but not yet." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." An excuse, a delay in God's account, is a plain refusal: for all commands and invitations, require present obedience. "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation." "And to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." 10. After all ways were tried, I found no relief. I blamed my education. I knew there was some change; my question was, whether it were the right one. Now, thought I, if I had not been religiously educated, but had turned all at once, it would have been more easily discernible. Thus I was entangled in my own ways: "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall, like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night, we are in desolate places as dead men." The true reason of my difficulty was, I was scorning, and not really desirous of light, unless it had been to my mind: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness."—"The scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not." Many other deceits and shifts my heart used, which now, at so great a distance, I cannot remember. But

these are the principal which occur upon reflection; and in them how evident is it, that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who knows, or can know it?”

Though now I seemed sometimes to have gone far, yet really I was wholly wrong; For, 1. All this while being convinced of the necessity of a righteousness, but ignorant of Christ, “I sought it by the works of the law.” 2. “The carnal mind, that is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God,” still continued. 3. All my exercise was only a tossing between light and love of sin: and sin still carried it; for my bosom-idols I would by no means part with. 4. Self was the animating principle of any form of religion that I had. So much of it, as would save me from hell, or take me to heaven, and no more I desired. 5. All this religion came and went with the occasions mentioned. It was not abiding.

7. Providentially, about this time, Clark’s Martyrology was put into my hand. I loved history, and read it greedily; and some impressions it left on me, that wanted not their own use at that time and afterwards: 1. The patience, joy, and courage of the martyrs, persuaded me, that there was a power, a reality in religion, beyond the power of mere nature. 2. I was convinced that I was a stranger as yet to this, because I could not think of suffering. 3. I was brought to some faint desires after acquaintance with this power of religion: “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” Oft was I, in reading this book, at Balaam’s wish, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” But like him, I loved not their life.

I observe, that at this time, 1. God restrained me, by my bodily infirmity, a trouble in my joints which made me unable to go, from many follies others ran into, and I was much inclined to. Thus he hedged in my way, that I should not find my lovers. 2. The Lord in mercy provided me comrades, that were tender of me, and took care of me. He fed me, and led me, though “I knew him not.” 3. So far was I from being thankful, that my proud heart fretted, that I was kept from those things others followed. I would have been at rejoicing in my strength; and vexed I was, that I had an occasion of glorying cut off. And I was not thankful, either for the Lord’s cutting off by this means many occasions of sin; nor for his mercy in providing persons to take care of me. O what reason have I to say, “The Lord is good to the unthankful and evil!”

CHAPTER IV.

An Account of the progress of the Lord’s work, the straits I was reduced to, and the courses I took for relief, from May, 1693, when I left Edinburgh, till I went to the family of Wemyss, August, 1696.

THE air agreeing neither with my mother nor me, she was advised, and at length resolved, to leave Edinburgh, and go to St Andrews, a place more wholesome, and more convenient for my education, to which she always had a special regard. Here I cannot but observe, the remarkable kindness of the Lord, in guiding me, though I then took no notice of it: “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee,

though thou hast not known me." 1. At a time when my heart inclined me most to folly, and by my entering into the college, I was exposed to many temptations to it, the Lord seasonably laid his hand on me, and visited me with trouble, that was a mean to restrain me, and keep me from contracting any intimacy with those whose converse might have proved prejudicial to me, and to engage me to choose sober comrades: "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." Again, 2. This indisposition, during the first two months of my stay at the college, being only in my joints, did not hinder, but further my studies; and the Lord provided one, who, though a stranger, and under no special obligations, yet attended me as close as he had been my servant, and was as tender of me as if he had been my brother. During this time, I made a greater proficiency in the Latin tongue than ever I had formerly done; the regent I was under being very skillful in teaching it, and attending very carefully. About this time he fell ill, and was not capable to attend; and I fell ill, and was thereby obliged to remove to St Andrews, which was much to my advantage. For I came under the care of Mr Thomas Taylor, a man very capable, and very careful of, and kind to me. And the class I left was broken up, the regent continuing indisposed that year, and falling next year into a frenzy. Thus the Lord chased me from place to place for my good, and every where provided me friends: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste and howling wilderness: he led him about and instructed him; he kept him as the apple of his eye." But God's kindness in guiding me to places for my good, and keeping me from inconveniences, snares, and dangers, into which others fell, had no effect on, nor were they noticed by me: "Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts, and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness: but when you entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination."

When I settled at St Andrews, the Lord left not his work and striving with me, but the same sovereign grace that began, went on with it: "I lifted up my hand unto them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me. Then said I, I will pour out my fury upon them. But I wrought for my name's sake." "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel."

Here the Lord cast my lot under choice means of grace, the ministry of worthy Mr Thomas Forrester. Under his searching ministry, the Lord began to give me some small discoveries of the more secret and spiritual evils of my heart, and carried me "into the secret chambers of imagery," to let me see what my heart did in the dark. 1. He opened mine eyes, to discern somewhat of that world of pride that is in the heart, and the wickedness of it. Though I was somewhat convinced of my own weakness, when I had any difficulty more than ordinary before me, and I would seek help from God, yet when I got through, I valued myself upon my acquittance. Of the wickedness and injustice of this, the Lord in some measure convinced me: "What hast thou, O man, that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, wherefore dost thou boast?" 2. He convinced me of the wickedness of the straying of my heart after idols, especially in the time of worship: "But as for them whose heart walked after the heart

of their detestable things, and their abominations, I will recompense their ways upon their own heads, saith the Lord God." "For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger, which setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me, I the Lord will answer him by myself." I was made to see, in some measure, the danger of offering such duties to him, who requireth us to "set our hearts" to what he speaks, and to "keep our foot when we come to the house of God." 3. I was likewise made to see somewhat of my trusting to my duties, and resting on the bare performance, inasmuch as I was not for the most challenged for the unsuitable performance, but for the entire omission of them; and with the Pharisee, I thought it enough, if I could say, that I did the duty. But now the Lord let me see, that more was required; though with him I could say, "I fast twice a-week," the Lord convinced me, that he might answer, "When ye fasted, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"

These, when added to former discoveries of guilt, gave frequently much disturbance, and cast me into racking perplexity and disquietude; but the darkness and enmity of my mind remaining, I still had recourse to wicked and vain courses for peace, such as those formerly mentioned; but they afforded me little quiet. Like Pharaoh, I engaged to amend those things wherein formerly I had failed; but with him I quickly broke, when the force that drove me to this was over. At last, finding no peace in any of these courses, I resolved to enter into solemn covenant with the Lord; and accordingly I wrote and subscribed a solemn covenant, whereby I bound myself to be for God, like Israel, when under the awful impressions of Sinai, and the dreadful appearance of God there; I said, "All that the Lord our God shall say unto us, we will hear and do it:" and, like the Scribe that came to Christ, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

When I had once done this, then I concluded all was right: For, 1. I found a sort of a present peace. Amendment I thought sufficient atonement, and such an engagement I looked on as performance. I now said, "I have peace-offerings with me; this day I have paid my vows." 2. I at this time found frequently an unusual sweetness in hearing the word; especially in hearing Mr Forrester lecture on Acts xiii. 43. on the Sabbath night. Here, as I received sometimes the most piercing convictions, so I received "tastes of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Thus, like the stony ground, "I heard the word, and anon with joy received it." 3. Common gifts increasing as light grew, I took them for special grace; and thus took up, with the foolish virgins, the lamp of a profession without oil. I began to set up for a virgin too, and, like such, I began to be esteemed by some of them for that which really I was not, but only appeared to be.

But the merciful and good God would not suffer me to rest here. "Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned. Why wentest thou about so much to change thy way? Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them." The Lord quickly let me see my mistake. For, 1. The imaginary peace that I had,

by making this covenant, was quickly lost by breaking it. Corruption retaining still its power, its locks not being yet cut, whenever a temptation offered, like Samson, upon a cry of the Philistines being on him, it broke all those ties, with which I foolishly, like his deceived mistress, thought it bound. Like the children of Israel at Sinai,* I engaged fairly, and herein thought all right; but when I came to Kibroth-hattaavah, which was the next station in their way through the wilderness, and a temptation fell in my way, I fell a murmuring, loathing the manna, and lusting after the flesh; and this broke all; the Lord's wrath on this being afresh intimated against me, as it was against them on that occasion. 2. Not only upon such breaches, met I with new convictions, but old ones were revived; and by this I found former accounts still to be standing against me, which filled me with confusion and jealousies of these ways: "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord." The Lord insinuated some discoveries of the treachery of my engagements; let me see how my heart was not sound, and how there were secret reserves in my engagements for some sins, from which my heart was not divorced; though yet I remember, that at the time I made those engagements, when my heart put in for sparing these, my light forced me, as it were, for the present, though not without reluctance, to give them up, at least in words; but really I did not do it. Now, the Lord gave some intimations of this heart-treachery, which, when further discovered by the event, my covenant could not quiet me: "They have well spoken all that they have said. O that there were such a heart in them!" 4. The Lord let loose some corruptions, like the Canaanites, to try me, took off the restraints, and then, like water dammed in, they became more violent and troublesome, and at length bore down all that I had set in their way. By these means, the Lord let me see the fruitlessness and vanity of this covenant, which, however specious-like, was indeed but a covenant with death. And, by the discovery, I was put into the utmost confusion, while the evil I thought I was provided against came upon me: "From the time that it goeth forth, it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night; and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." This I found verified to my sad experience.

Notwithstanding the felt vanity of these legal, selfish, anti-evangelical courses, I still cleaved to them: For, 1. The peace I lost by breaking, I still endeavoured to recover by renewing my covenant, trusting myself in the greatness of my way, and laboured in the fire. My heart, when I was defeated, gave me such advice as the King of Syria got from his servants, when he was defeated by Israel: "Number an army like that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they." I laid the blame still on some accidental defect in my former management; and I thought, were that provided against, all would be well. 2. When still I found something wanting, I cast about in my own mind, and contrived to make it up with something extraordinary of my own, the multiplication of duties, or some such thing or other. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-

* Deut. v. 27, &c. compared with Numb. xxxiii. 16. and Numb. xl. 34

offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

But still these vain refuges failed me, and my case was truly miserable while pursuing them. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the shadow of Egypt your confusion." Now, as I was really miserable in following those courses, so, if the Lord of infinite mercy had not prevented it, I had landed in one of four sad consequences, wherein such exercises and courses often terminate. Either, 1. If I had been freed from convictions, or the Lord had given over his striving with me, and carrying on the work of conviction, after convictions had carried me the length of a form of religion, I had surely, notwithstanding all the disappointments, rested satisfied with that, as having "found the life of my hand," or having, by the endeavours of my hand, and its labour, obtained that which would give me a sort of life. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thy hand, (that is, a sort of life by thy labour,) therefore thou wast not grieved." Or, 2. If convictions had been carried on, and the Lord had left me still to follow those courses I took, I would have "laboured in the fire all my days, wearied and vexed myself for very vanity"—"spending my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which doth not profit;" in a continual vicissitude of vows, covenants, engagements, and resolutions; breaches and disquietudes, engagements, and false peace; breaches and racking convictions, would alternately have taken place: and thus I had spent my days, "and at the end been a fool." Or, 3. After I had wearied myself for a while in those vain ways, I would have utterly given up with religion as a vain thing, and said, with those mentioned by the prophet, who said, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" And so, with them, I had gone over to open atheism and profanity. Or, 4. Being forced to seek shelter for my convictions, and being so often and sadly disappointed by all the ways I tried, I had at last ended in despair, like Judas, and said, "This evil is of the Lord, why wait I any longer?" like that wicked king. And in very deed I had some experience of all these issues. Sometimes I sat down with the form, "and judged I was rich and increased in goods, and stood in need of nothing." Sometimes I wearied myself in running from one of those vain courses to another. At other seasons I turned quite careless, as finding no profit, and was just at throwing up all care of religion; and very often I was on the very brink of despair, almost quite distracted.

When I was thus disappointed, especially after making, and frequently repeating my vows and engagements, I was cast into the utmost perplexity to find where the fault lay. I found this way of covenanting with God recommended by ministers, mentioned in the Scripture, and the people of God declared they had found the benefit of it. I could not accuse myself, at least at sometimes, for known guile in the making of it. What I en-

gaged to do, I was resolved upon at the time. I did engage with much concern and solemnity ; and, for some time after, I would have walked with much strictness. But though I could not then discern where the blame lay, I have since been made to see it. 1. " Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, I still went about to establish a righteousness of my own." And though in words I renounced this, yet indeed I sought righteousness and peace, not in the Lord Jesus Christ, who " is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes," but in my own covenants and engagements ; so that I really put them in Christ's stead. 2. Whatever room I in words allowed Christ as to forgiveness for the past, yet my peace and hope of it for the future, and so my trust, was in the evenness of my own walk. I obtained not righteousness, because I sought it " as it were by the works of the law." This neglect of Christ, and substituting my own covenants and obedience in his room, was evident ; because, whenever I was under convictions of sin, instead of recourse to his blood, I still sought peace only in renewing my vows. 3. The consent I gave to the law, was not from the reconciliation of my heart to its holiness, but merely in compliance with the constraint put upon me by my convictions. But in very deed the enmity against it still continued : and I would not have made it my choice, if that had not forced me to it ; so that I subjected not myself to it. 4. I engaged to live a new life with an old heart, not being yet made to see, " that unless the tree is made good, the fruit cannot be good." 5. " 'The eye was not single,' " all I aimed at was self, to be eased of convictions, and obtain peace from these racking disquietudes I was under. I had not the least concern for the Lord's glory, provided I were safe. 6. In a word, I engaged before the Lord had thoroughly engaged me. We may be willing, in some sort, before the Lord hath made us truly willing. The first real kindness begins on his side ; and we are never engaged to love till the Lord's kindness draw us. The force of convictions may overpower us into some pretensions of kindness. Thus it was with me. Willing I was to be saved from hell, and to have heaven, under the general notion of a good place ; but not to be saved in God's way, on his terms, and in order to the ends he proposes in the salvation of sinners.

This was not my only trouble at this time. Now I was engaged in the study of metaphysics and natural theology, accustomed to subtle notions, and tickled with them ; upon which Satan, in conjunction with the natural atheism of my heart, took occasion to cast me into racking disquietude about the great truths of religion, more especially the being of a God. Thus, in the justice of God, that in which I delighted, I mean subtle and abstract notions, proved the occasion of much perplexing difficulty to me. For, 1. Some seeming success in my studies, the first year I engaged in the study of philosophy, fostered the natural conceit we all have of our own ability to know, and emboldened me to proceed further than was meet. So true is that of the word " Knowledge puffeth up." 2. On this the natural curiosity of my vain mind took a liberty to inquire, without fear, into things too high, and made me promise myself satisfaction about them, through my own inquiries : " Vain man would be wise, though he is like the wild ass's colt." Thus he intrudes into those things which he hath not seen, " vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." 3. And thus, on suffering a disappointment, and failing of success, the natural atheism and enmity of my carnal mind, that rather inclines to reject the things of God, than our own darkness, began, when puzzled, to inquire, " How can these

things be? Thus, "professing myself wise, I became a fool." 4. Satan, that waits all advantages, finding me thus caught in the thicket, plunged me deeper, by throwing in the "fiery darts" of subtle arguings against the being of a God, whereby all was set on a flame, and I was sometimes cast into violent convulsions.

This exercise about the being of God was much more disquieting than that formerly mentioned: then there was only an unsettledness of mind proceeding from the felt want of evidence sufficient to quiet the mind, in that assurance of the truth, that was necessary to embolden it, without fear, in all its straits to have recourse to, and take rest in God. Now, there were contrary disquieting arguments: then I was only at that of the disciple, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." But now I was disturbed with the working of "the ruler of darkness," and high imaginations exalting themselves against God."

Though the atheism and enmity of my heart against God, were still great and unremoved, yet the Lord suffered me not to yield, but made me dread and recoil at the terrible conclusion aimed at by those arguings. For, 1. There remained so much of that natural knowledge of a Deity which God had made manifest even in the heathens, that is in their consciences, and there was so much of strength added to it by the external evidence of this truth, in the works of creation and providence, as made me recoil at the thoughts of that horrible conclusion of the Atheist, "There is no God." 2. Being at the same time deeply affected with strong apprehensions of the shortness and uncertainty of a present life, I dreaded to admit the conclusion, that I saw would shake the foundations of any hope of relief for the future from the other side of time: "If the foundations be destroyed, what hath the righteous done?"

In this difficulty, betwixt light that would not admit of a flat denial of the being of a God, and atheism inflamed and strengthened by Satan's fiery darts, I betook myself still to vain and selfish courses. My disturbance was from reasonings, and I thought to relieve myself by my own reasonings. Nothing more, did I foolishly think, can be requisite to establish my mind about this truth, and for ever to quiet my mind in a firm assent to it, than to obtain demonstrative arguments for the being of a God. Thus I thought "by searching to find out God," and, like the Psalmist, when shaken about the providence of God, "I thought to know it," that is, by my own reasonings, I expected to obtain establishment in the truth, and an answer to the objections urged against it.

Wherefore I seriously set myself to the search of such arguments; and I found them, but found not that relief I expected: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." For, 1. The most convincing and forcible of those arguments, proceeding upon the absurdity of the contrary conclusion with great evidence, would not allow of any thing to be said to the argument, and so extorted an assent; but not enlightening the mind with any satisfying notions and discoveries of the God whom they obliged me to own as existent, my mind was not quieted. For in things of any practical influence, without some competent measure of light about the nature of things, the soul requiring satisfaction, not only as to their reality, but their meetness to answer those practical uses about which it is concerned, cannot rest without some discoveries of this: "Thomas said unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" 2. These arguments forced indeed some assent at the time; but not refuting contrary

objections, whenever the light of them was removed, and contrary objections came into view again, I was entirely shaken, like him in Cicero, who read Plato's arguments for the immortality of the soul, and said, "When I read, I assent, I cannot tell how; but so soon as I lay down the book, all the assent is gone." It is faith alone, that, as the word is, "reproves" contrary arguings, and plants in the soul an abiding light, that keeps the soul from its adherence to truth. Thus, like the philosophers of old, "in the wisdom of God, by wisdom I knew not God."

Though I was thus entangled, rather than extricated, by these selfish shifts, yet my vain mind still followed these courses. For, 1. What hitherto I had failed of, I expected I might find by some further progress in learning; and therefore I applied myself vigorously to that. But any little progress I made, made me still more sensible how far I was disappointed, and made me experience the truth of this, that "he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." The further I proceeded, I still found the more difficulties, and the less satisfaction. When this course could not avail, then I spent my weary hours in vain wishes for some extraordinary discoveries: "Nay, but if one rise from the dead, they will believe."

Though I reached not the satisfaction I aimed at, yet I cannot say but this exercise had some useful effects. 1. It let me see, that I had need of some further evidence and establishment about the truths of religion, than hitherto I had either attained, or knew how to attain. Thus I had got some view of it before: now I was more confirmed in it. 2. My mind being sometimes more quieted as to these truths in hearing the word than by all the arguments, I was inclined to hope the evidence I wanted might come from the Lord. 3. I was beat down somewhat from that towering opinion of my own knowledge and abilities, to know that my first seeming success in philosophy gave me, and brought me to a useful diffidence of my inability to reach satisfaction, even about natural things, and solve objections that lay against truths, which yet, upon clear argument, I was forced to admit; which afterwards was of considerable use to me.

But during this period of time, under all these wrestlings and strugglings betwixt growing light and sin, corruptions, as I grew in years, grew stronger and stronger, took deeper root, and received an increase of strength by occasional temptations, and new force from the weak resistance made to them by these vain courses. As the law came nearer in its spiritual meaning and extent, sin revived, and appeared more discernible in its strength; and sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me inclination to all evil. Being fretted, not subdued, it grew stronger, till at length it slew me.

Under this perplexity, I betook myself still to one or other of the fore-mentioned vain courses: "I gadded about to change my way, sent to Egypt, and went to Assyria, yet could not they help me." But yet these exercises and perplexities had some intermissions, and then I turned remiss and careless. "My goodness, like the morning cloud and early dew, soon passed away."

However, by these means I was brought to a specious-like form of religion. For now, 1. I took some care to avoid those sins, whether secret or open, that thwarted the light of my conscience most plainly. I not only abstained from those evils to which most, even of the soberer sort of students were frequently drawn over: but with a sort of resolution I kept at a distance from the occasions of them. Thus I began "to escape the pollu-

tions of the world, through the knowledge of the truth." 2. I was more exact and punctual in attending duties, public, private, and secret, than heretofore, and that not without some concern, at least sometimes, as to my inward frame in them. Thus, I thought, "I kept his ordinances." 3. When I was ensnared, either into the commission of sin, or omission of duty, I was brought to a deep sorrow; and for some time "walked mournfully before God." 4. Whereas I always had a sort of awful regard for them that feared God, since ever I began to be in the least awakened, now I began to have a sort of liking and kindness to them, and pleasure in their company and converse, even about matters of religion. This light forced an approbation of them on my mind, and so to give glory to God, their light so shining before me, that I could not but take notice of them. 5. I had frequent "tastes of the word of God, and powers of the world to come," which made me delight in approaching to God. And, 6. I got some things that looked like a return of prayer; when under a sense of impotency, I betook myself to God by prayer; in any strait I found help so remarkable, that I could not but take notice of it. The Lord hereby drew me gradually in to expect good in his way; and though I was wrong in the main, as it were, encouraged the faintest beginnings of a look toward a return. "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me: because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

Now, though by these means I got a name to live, yet really I was dead. For, 1. The natural darkness still remained uncured. Some dawnings of light were indeed begun, and some discoveries made of what formerly I had not known, yet the power of darkness still remained, and "the veil was not yet taken away, nor were spiritual things seen in a true light." 2. The enmity of my mind against the law,* especially in some instances, remaining in force, there was not "a respect to all God's commands." I had not yet a sight of the beauty of holiness. Nor did I in my heart approve of the whole yoke of Christ's precepts as good and desirable. It was not that I delighted in holiness and conformity to the law, at least in some instances, but that I was undone without it, that made me aim at any sort of compliance. 3. "I yet sought righteousness as it were by the works of the law." I was wholly legal in all I did, not seeing the necessity, the security, the glory of the gospel method of salvation, by "seeking righteousness and strength in the Lord Christ alone." 4. Self was the spring of all. My only aim was to be saved, without any regard had to the glory of the Lord, or any inquiry made, how it might be consistent with it to save one who had so deeply offended. In a word, all my religion was constrained, violent, selfish, legal, and anti-evangelical. These, not to mention other things, were still wrong.

Reflections upon the foregoing Exercise.

It will not be improper, to review the preceding exercise, and offer two or three observations.

The foregoing exercise affords me full confirmation of many of the truths contested by the Pelagians and others, concerning man's inability to do good, and the corruption of his nature. When I read and hear their

* Compare Rom. vii. 8. with Rom. vii. 12, 22.

high-swelling words of vanity in commendation of man, and in praise of his free-will to God, his good inclinations; and when I hear specious-like arguments offered for proof of these notions, I have no reason to be shaken. Will they dispute me out of my senses? May I not believe the word? or must I wrest and distort scriptures, to make places that appear unfavourable to free-will, accord with those notions of it which some advance? Sure I am, if they will not allow Scripture to be its own interpreter, it is safer, at least in those things that concern our own natural state, which conscience may know, to admit experience to comment, rather than reason, proceeding upon abstract notions: and where Scripture and experience join, there we have the fullest confirmation of the truths that are established in the mouth of two such witnesses; the last not only confirming, but illustrating the testimony of the former. If they say, that their hearts are not so perverse and ill inclined, and that they find inclinations to good in them, I cannot say so of mine: yet, by the way, I must observe, that in their practice they go seldom further, if so far as others, who agree with me in owning their hearts so wicked, their corruptions so strong, their wills depraved, and set upon evil, that they can do nothing well-pleasing to God. Now surely, if matters are as they represent them, they are far to blame. As for me, I find more solid truth in that one Scripture, that tells us, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," than in many volumes of idle anti-scriptural notions, reared up on the subtle arguings of men, whose eyes have never yet been opened to see the plagues of their own hearts, and who therefore run out in asserting such an ability and power, and inclination to good in man, as neither Scripture, nor the experience of such as have their eyes in the least measure opened, admits of. However, if others will think that there are such good inclinations in them, I must disavow my part in them. Woful experience convinces me, and obliges me to acknowledge, to my own shame, that I never looked toward the Lord's way, save when he drew me: "I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." I never went longer in it than the force lasted. I inclined to sit down, and sat indeed down at every step: no great sign I had any heart to the way! I never got up again, but when the Lord's power was of new put forth. I all this while never went one step but with a grudge: I frequently looked back to Sodom; "I have been as a backsliding heifer." I was grieved for what I left behind; my heart clave to what my light had the greatest opposition to. Thus I was of them that rebel against the light: I often refused where the command was plainest. When I was brought into a strait, I betook myself rather to any shift than to Christ. Sin bit me, and yet I loved it; my heart deceived me oft, and yet I trusted in it rather than God. God dealt with me in a way of kindness; but when he spoke to me in my prosperity, I would not hear: "He smote me, and I went on frowardly." I never parted with any sin, till God beat and drove me from it, and hedged in my way. Surely this looks like "the heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

The foregoing exercise shows what a depth of deceitfulness is in the heart of man. How many shifts has my heart used to elude the design of all these strivings of the Lord's Spirit with me? What strange shifts has the heart of man, and how many are they? I have named many, but the one half is not told. All these shifts respect but one point in religion. If one would undertake to give an account of those deceits only which are more noted, with respect to the whole of his walk and way, how many volumes

might he write? There is much true divinity couched in that short Scripture, "The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it?"—"Who can understand his errors?" When I, upon a review, remember so many, how many more, might I have noticed, if I had observed them at the time, or soon after. And if so many may be seen, how many secret, undiscernible, or at least undiscerned deceptions, are there?

How far may we go in religion, and yet come short? Many things I seemed to have and do: I "did many things, and heard gladly." I was "almost persuaded to be a Christian."—"I seemed to escape the pollutions that are in the world, by the knowledge of the truth."—I seemed enlightened, and a partaker of the heavenly gift, and got some tastes of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. I underwent many changes, and yet all the while was naught, defective as to the main: "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—"Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God."

I cannot but look back with wonder to the astonishing patience of God, that suffered my manners so long, and the steadiness he showed in pursuing his work, notwithstanding many provocations to desist, "still working for his name's sake." All the creation could not have afforded so much patience. The disciples of Christ would have called for fire from heaven. Yea, Moses, the meekest man on earth, would have found more to irritate him here than at Meribah. Glory to God, that we have to do with him, and not with man. "His ways are not our ways: nor his thoughts ours. But as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways and thoughts of mercy above ours."

I must bear witness to the reasonableness of God's way: For, 1. These things about which he awakened my concern; deliverance from wrath, eternal salvation, and security respecting them, were such as my own reason, upon the best attention, could not but own worthy of the utmost and first concern. He did not call me to vex myself about vanity, and things of no importance. 2. The way he dealt with me, was not destructive to the nature of my faculties, but improved them. He enlightened my eyes, to see what he would have me do, and he forced not my will, but swayed it in a way suitable to its nature, to a compliance, so far as I went. This was not to force, but gently to bend the will to those things, to which it was really proper for it to incline. 3. He always observed the true order of the faculties. He swayed the will, so far as it went, in compliance with his work, by sending forth his light into the mind, that, in the true order of things, should guide the understanding. 4. He carried me on to consideration. He did not seek, as it were, to entangle the affections, and by them carry my mind away in a hurry, as sin and Satan are wont to do, who guides sinners, as the Philistines did Samson, they first put out his eyes, and then made him grind in their mill. 5. The Lord never obliged me to part with any way, any sin, or refuge to which I betook myself, till he had let me see, that it was not only against my duty, but my true interest. 6. So far as I complied with his call, I cannot say that his way was fruitless, or that he was "a barren wilderness, or a land of drought." The meanest and most slender piece of compliance, wanted not its reward. "Who is there among you that would shut the doors for nought: neither do ye kindle a fire on mine altar for nought." Thus the Lord's work was power, not force. He drew, but it was "with the cords of love, and the bands of a man." He bid me quit many things, but they were vain things

that were no bread. "Remember this, and show yourselves men : bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal."

Though it was congruous to reason, yet it was a work above the power of nature. I cannot ascribe its rise or progress to myself; for it was what I sought not, I thought not of, I liked not, yea, I hated it, I feared, I avoided, I shifted it; and when all this would not do, I opposed it. For I was of those that rebel against the light. I cannot ascribe it to any outward means. There are many parts of it which they did not reach. The most plausible failed, the weakest wrought the effect. Neither strong nor weak had always the like effect; but the work was carried on by the secret indiscernible power of Him who is like "the wind blowing where it listeth." The work bears an impress of God in all its steps; the word that awakened me was the voice of him that makes the dead to hear; "that calleth things that are not as if they were." The light that shone was the candle of the Lord searching, yea, piercing into the hidden parts of the belly; tracing a deceitful and unsearchable heart through all its turnings and windings. The work was that of one who is every where, and who knows every thing, and is of one mind, and so not to be turned; who will not faint, nor be "discouraged till he have brought forth judgment unto victory." The work is uniform, though variously carried on through many interruptions, over many oppositions, for a long period of time, by means seemingly weak, improper, and contrary, suitable only for him "whose ways are in the sea, and whose paths are in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known." In a word, it was a bush burning, and not consumed only by the presence of God. It was a spark maintained in the midst of an ocean, notwithstanding floods continually poured on it, to extinguish it. This flame was maintained by oil secretly conveyed into it, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

PART III.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROGRESS OF THE LORD'S WORK, FOR THE SPACE OF ABOUT THREE YEARS ENSUING, FROM AUGUST, 1696, TO JUNE, 1699; THE DREADFUL STRAIT TO WHICH I WAS AT LAST BROUGHT, WITH MY DELIVERANCE, AND THE STATE OF MATTERS WITH ME FOR SOME TIME AFTER THIS.

CHAPTER I.

An account of the progress of my convictions, temptations, and vain reliefs, from the time I went to the Wemyss, till I was at the last brought to the utmost extremity.

WHEN I had studied philosophy three years, being interested in it, and somewhat puffed up with what progress I had made, and designed and expected to make; though I must say, that still as knowledge increased, self-conceit decreased; and I apprehended I knew more the first year than ever I thought I knew afterwards. Being thus prepared, I designed to go

abroad, and improve myself farther, to which also I was advised; but two things prevented this proposal,—my mother would not consent; and the former exercise having brought me into bondage, through fear of death, I was afraid to run the hazards I must run of my life, so long as I was in so unsettled a case as to my soul's state: wherefore, at the request of some friends, I consented rather to engage as chaplain to a family for some time.

Accordingly, in August, 1696, I went to the Wemyss. When I came there, a stranger amongst strangers, and persons of considerable quality, by my natural bashfulness, the censoriousness of my auditors, the publicity of the appearances I was obliged to make, to which I had not been formerly accustomed, my want of good breeding, and the like, I was, for a time, in a very great strait, forced to retirement, and to petition for help how to behave. And though it was my own, not the Lord's honour I designed and was concerned for, yet he that hears the cry of the ravens, and would not overlook Ahab's humiliation, and the Ninevites' repentance, did not fail me in my straits, but helped, so far as was necessary, to maintain the respect due to the station I was in, and to obtain kindness.

During the first half-year, or so, that I was here, I was somewhat diverted from my principal work, being obliged to study what was necessary for accomplishing me for converse in the world. But still I held on, and the more difficulty I met with, I kept the closer to the form of religion I had taken up. Besides, my station now called and obliged me to somewhat more. But leaving this, which is only introductory, I proceed to that which is mainly and only designed in this narrative.

I had not long been here, when I was often necessarily, and frequently without sufficient necessity, engaged in debates about the truth of religion, the divinity of the Scriptures, and the most important doctrines delivered in them, by which I was drawn to read the writings of Deists, and other enemies to religion, that I might be acquainted with the arguments by which those with whom I sometimes had occasion to dispute oppose the truth. As to the result of those arguments, with respect to others, I shall here wave it, because others are concerned in it; only I may say, I found it true, "that foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, are unprofitable and vain." For "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." And "profane and vain babblings do increase unto more ungodliness." And to my sad experience I found, that "their word doth eat, as doth a canker," or gangrene. It is of an infectious and contagious nature; and therefore it is safest to shun and avoid them, and follow the wise man's advice: "To forsake the foolish, and live;" and depart from "a foolish man, when we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge;" and "cease from the instruction that causes to err from the word of knowledge."

This was of very dangerous consequence to me, and could not prove otherwise to one in my case: For, 1. I was not "rooted and grounded in the truth," being neither notionally instructed in the authority on which the Scriptures are received, nor acquainted practically with its power, and so was naked of that "armour of light," that is necessary toward a conflict with such enemies. 2. The power of that enmity and darkness, which incline the vain mind of man to reject and carp at the truths of God, as foolishness, still remained unsubdued; and so I was, "as the children who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine." 3. The objections I found started were many, struck at the foundations—were new, and surprising

to one who was so unsettled ; and were dressed up by the slight and cunning craftiness of them who “ lie in wait to deceive.” 4. I was not acquainted with that watchfulness, vigilance, and humble sobriety, that was necessary to prevent Satan’s gaining any advantage. 5. Satan, on this, finding so fair an occasion, did not let it slip ; for he goes about, seeking such seasons ; and finding things thus, he improved it to my great disquietude.

The adversary finding all things thus prepared, set on me furiously, and employed many against me. 1. He wrought up the natural atheism, darkness and enmity of my heart to vent itself against the truths of religion, in foolish inquiries, “ Is it so ? ” “ How can these things be ? ” And what authority hast thou, since thou requirest such things ? 2. He employed some who had all advantages, and were the most likely to prevail, persons smooth, sober, and who opposed the rational arguments ; such, sometimes, the devil makes use of, who seem themselves “ not far from the kingdom of God,” like the Scribes who answered and questioned our Lord civilly, whose “ words are smother than butter, while war is in their heart.” And these are usually more prevalent ; for with their “ fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple.” 3. He himself acted sometimes the subtle serpent, putting and suggesting subtle queries, “ Hath God said so ? ” And sometimes he threw in fiery darts, to inflame and disorder me. Thus I found, when I was alone, when I was in prayer, and most serious, hellish oaths and grievous blasphemous suggestions, cast forcibly into my mind, which made me tremble. No wonder he should deal so with me, when he impudently suggested, to “ him in whom he had nothing,” such blasphemous proposals, as that of “ falling down to worship him.”

By all these ways he assaulted me, and I was grievously tossed about with all the truths of religion. 1. The being of God was again brought in question : the enemy said daily, “ Where is thy God ? ” And the atheism of my heart said also, “ There is no God, and who is the Lord ? ” I was assaulted about his providence, and all the disorders of the world were urged to my great disturbance, “ As for me, my feet were almost gone ; my steps had well nigh slipped. The ungodly prosper in the world, they increase in riches, and therefore his people return thither ; waters of a full cup are wrung out to them : and they say, How doth God know ? And is there knowledge in the most High ? ” 3. I was assaulted as to the truth of the word, and many ways troubled about it ; when I read, when I thought about it, I was sometimes plied hard with grievous suggestions. The want of sufficient evidence was complained of : “ What sign showest thou, then, that we may see and believe thee ? What dost thou work ? ” At other times it was blamed, one while of obscurity, “ How long dost thou make us doubt ? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” And anon another suggestion was put in against some passages as hard : “ This is a hard saying, who can hear it ? ” When this took not, it was accused in some places of plain blasphemy : “ He hath spoken blasphemy. Ye have heard his blasphemy.” It was blamed as contradictory to itself, “ We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever ; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? ” Its promises were called in question, “ Where is the promise of his coming ? ” As were also its threats—“ Every vision faileth.” “ Behold they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord ? Let it come now.” Thus was I daily perplexed, insomuch that it was a terror sometimes, for fear of these suggestions, to

me to look into the Bible. 4. The mystery of the gospel was particularly set upon, and represented as foolishness, as setting up new gods; and oft was I put to answer, "How can these things be?"

The subtle enemy, who had often solicited me to high thoughts of myself, now, when he found it for his purpose, urged upon me mean thoughts of myself, and pressed me to a bastard sort of humility. He often whispered me in the ear, It is vain for you to expect to rid yourself of these difficulties, when so many learned men, who have studied the point with so much care, and who were far more capable to discern the truth, cannot reach satisfaction, but have rejected them. "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

By this I was brought into grievous perplexity, and many sad agitations; "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" But still I tried wrong courses. 1. I attempted by my own reasonings to relieve myself, "I thought to know this." 2. When this failed, I bought and read books written about the truth of religion. This indeed, had it been kept in its own place, was allowable and useful. But I expected more than I had reason to look for, and as I used it, this was only the fruit of unbelief, and a vain course running to Ashur, sending to Egypt. 3. I wished for visions, voices, or some extraordinary course: "Nay, but if one rise from the dead, they will believe." 4. When these failed, with the sluggard I sat down discouraged: "The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh." 5. I sometimes betook myself to prayer; but in this I desiderated success, not seeking in the right way, nor to right ends.

But all these ways failed me, "I took counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily. I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" 1. As to my own reasonings, they avail not against him who esteems "iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood."—"When I thought to know it, it was too painful." It was labour in mine eyes. 2. As for books they satisfied not as to the things they mentioned, and besides many of my scruples were such as were overlooked by them, so they proved physicians of no value: "How profitable are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?" 3. As to extraordinary expectations, God justly rejected them: "They have Moses and the prophets, and if they will not believe them, neither would they believe though one should rise from the dead." 4. My sloth still increased my trouble; that foolish poring fretting my spirit, slew me: "The desire of the sluggard killeth him, because his hands refuse to work."

I would have quite sunk under the weight of this trouble, and been swallowed up of sorrow, and landed in despair, if its force had not been somewhat abated by occasional considerations, that were by the good hand of God sometimes one way, sometimes another, brought to my mind. 1. When the hellish conclusions at which all these temptations aimed, when renouncing of religion, rejecting the Scriptures, &c. were urged, it was often seasonably suggested, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The Lord powerfully convinced, and kept the conviction strong on my mind, that whenever I parted with revelation, I behoved to give up with all prospect of certainty or satisfaction about eternal life. What Deists told me of the demonstrations of a future happiness built only

upon nature's light, had no weight with me, because I had tried those long ago, and found them, to my apprehension, insufficient : and had they been sufficient, I was not a whit the nearer satisfaction ; to tell me of such a state, without any account of its nature, or the terms on which it is attainable, was all one as if nothing had been said about it. This created still a dread of the conclusion in my mind ; and still, when I was solicited to quit the Scriptures, I returned, " To whom shall I go to find the words of eternal life ?" 2. Upon a due observation of those who were truly religious, I could not but look on them, though their real worth I did not yet discern, as the better part of mankind : and the Lord created a dread in my soul of conclusions that involved the charge of a lie in a matter of the greatest importance against the better part of mankind : " If I should speak thus, I would offend against the generation of thy children." The Lord opened mine eyes to see the remarkable folly of those who abandoned revealed religion. Not to mention the impious lives of the generality, I saw the more sober sort guilty of unaccountable folly. The Scripture tells them plainly, that if they have a desire to be satisfied as to the truth of its pretensions, they must walk in the way of its precepts to find it : " If any man will do his will, he shall know this doctrine, if it is of God, or if I speak of myself." But they walk in direct contradiction to its precepts, and yet complain of the want of evidence, while they refuse to try that way wherein only it is to be found. Again some sober and learned, and otherwise inquisitive persons, acknowledge, that if we are either cut off from hope, or left to uncertainty about a future state of happiness, we are miserable ; and that they themselves are yet uncertain. While, after all this has been confessed by them, and by some to myself, I saw them at little or no pains to be satisfied : " The scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not." Yea, I found this sort of persons much more eager in searching after what might strengthen their doubts, than what might satisfy them : this smelled rank of a hatred of light. Now, I thought it was not safe to follow those whom I saw so evidently foolish, and who did so plainly proclaim their own folly : " Evil men understand not judgment ; but they that seek the Lord understand all things." This had that weight with me, that I now ceased to wonder that such were unsatisfied about the truth of religion, and that there was no ground of doubting its truth, because they are unsatisfied. 4. The shining evidence of the power of religion in the lives, but more especially in the deaths of the martyrs, of whom I had formerly read, often stayed me as to this, that there is a reality in religion, when I was driven from all other holds : " They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Here I was obliged to own the finger of God, especially when I considered their numbers, their quality, and all circumstances. 5. The known instances of the power of religion in children in their tender years, was sometimes of great use, and appeared of great weight. It checked the force of temptations that drove me to doubt of the reality of religion : " Thus, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord ordained strength, and in some measure stilled the enemy and the avenger." 6. The sensible and violent opposition I found Satan making to the Scriptures in all the fore-mentioned ways, was often strengthening, and persuaded me in some measure, that there behoved to be a reality in religion, for I could not see what could induce him thus to oppose it, if it were a cheat : " Is Satan divided ?" 7. I got frequent touches in the way of conviction : and thus finding the power and piercing virtue of the word

making “manifest the secrets of my heart, I was forced to fall down, and own God to be in it of a truth.” 8. Satan sometimes departed, and left me for a season, and then I had some intermission of my sore trouble. 9. I found a secret hope begot and cherished, I could not tell how, at some seasons, even amidst the violence of temptations, that I should be satisfied, and “that I should yet have good cause to praise God; and that what “I knew not now, I should know hereafter,” which was strengthened by the consideration of what others had met with, who had been visited with temptations that were somewhat like mine; although I doubted if ever in all respects any had been so molested as I, and if there was “any sorrow like unto mine.” Yea, sometimes I was made to hope, that Satan’s raging foreboded that his time was but short.

As, by these and the like means, the force of the temptation was somewhat broken, so I was encouraged to several things in which I have reason to own God was kind to me, in keeping me to them. 1. Hereby I was engaged to hold on in an attendance, with more concern in duties of religion, public, private, and secret; and so to wait at Wisdom’s door-post, of which afterwards I found the advantage. 2. Hereby I was enabled to conceal all my own straits from others, who thereby might either have been stumbled or hardened in their evil way. I was unwilling others should know any thing that might disgust them at religion, “Tell it not in Gath,—lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.” In conversing with such as were shaken, I still endeavoured to stand for the truth, as if I had been under no doubt about it; and I must own, that while I did so, the Lord often countenanced me, and satisfied me, about what I had formerly been disquieted. How good a master is God! A word spoken for him is not lost; nor will he suffer the least service to pass unrewarded. A heathen Cyrus must have his hire; and so must Nebuchadnezzar.

Before I leave this, I must observe some things which the Lord taught me by this exercise. 1. I hereby learned the danger and vanity of reasoning with Satan. When I began to answer him with my own reasonings, he had still great advantage; he easily evaded all my arguments, and easily repelled my answers, and enforced his suggestions; and when his suggestions were to be maintained in point of argument, he injected them with that impudent violence that I was not able to stand against them. Our safest course is to resist, to hold at a distance, and to avoid communing with him. 2. I must observe likewise the wise providence of God, that the greatest difficulties that lie against religion are hid from Atheists. All the objections I met with in their writings were not near so subtle as those which were often suggested to me. The reason of it, from the nature of the thing, is obvious: such persons take not a near-hand view of religion; and while persons stand at a distance, neither the difficulties nor the advantages that attend it are discerned. Again, Satan finding all things quiet with them, keeps all so; and finding that they are easily ensnared, he uses not force. It is where he is in danger of losing a person, that he uses his utmost efforts; when Christ is ready to cast him out, then he rages and tears poor souls. Besides, the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, permits not all these hellish subtleties to be published, in tenderness to the faith of the weak. He that sets bounds to the raging of the sea, and says, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,” keeps Satan under chains, and he cannot step beyond his permission.

This exercise had several effects upon me. 1. The fears I was brought

under fixed a deeper sense of my frailty in general on me, and that I was but a man: "Put them in fear, that the nations may know themselves to be but men, Selah." 2. By this the Lord withheld me from my vain projections about learning. Now I was so far from expecting, as some time I had done, that I feared I should fall short of what was absolutely needful to my own well-being: "I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me." 3. Whereas I was educated with an eye to the ministry, and aimed that way; now I came to see the difficulty, and repented my rash intentions; and laid down a resolution to look no more that way, unless the Lord satisfied me fully about those truths of which I now doubted; I could not without horror think of speaking to others what I believed not myself. 4. My bondage, "through fear of death," was increased and grew stronger. 5. I was urged to somewhat more of closeness in the performance of duty, though often I was urged to give it over as vain; yet I still resolved to hold on in it. 6. I was still more and more confirmed in the necessity of further evidence for the truth of religion, than I either had attained, or knew how to attain.

All this while I was under various inconveniences, that increased my trouble, and gave advantage to my corruptions. 1. Most of the conversation I had was with such as helped forward my trouble. I was a companion of fools, and so nigh to destruction: "For he that walks with the wise shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." 2. I had no friend to whom I could, with freedom, and with any prospect of satisfaction, impart my mind: "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." 3. Endeavours to conceal entirely my concern and trouble, broke me: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old." 4. I was laid aside from my studies, and had no diversion, nor could follow any; I had a heart to nothing; could not read, except that sometimes I read the Scriptures, or some other practical book. Unless when there was an intermission of my trouble, for near a year and a half I read very little; and this slothful posture laid me open to temptations, and made corruptions grow stronger: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof. And the stone wall thereof was broken down."

On this account, my corruption took vent several ways: 1. In vain and slothful desires: "I desired and had not." 2. In foolish contrivances and searches, how to ease my smart: "I communed with my own heart upon my bed, and my spirit made diligent search," but without a due eye to the Lord. 3. I spent my time in foolish complaints that dispirited me; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. 3. I was sometimes at cursing the day of my birth, wishing that I had never been born, or that I had died as soon as born: "Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?" 5. I wished often that I had been in other circumstances, and that I had been bred to the plough, or some such employment, and that I might have in the desert a cottage, "a place of way-faring men," where I might give myself to continual grief. 6. My spirit sometimes rose in quarrellings against God: "I thought on God, and was troubled. I said, Wherefore do I cry, and thou dost not hear me?" And frequently I was not far from that, "Wilt thou always be to me as a liar, and waters that fail?"

After I had thus wearied myself; after the edge and violence of the

temptations above-mentioned was by the considerations formerly narrated blunted and somewhat broken, rather than removed; and, eased by Satan's departure for a season, I inclined to rest: and Satan, on this, finding matters prepared for an assault, he made fresh attempts in another and no less disquieting manner: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he cometh, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The devil cannot be at rest, where he hath no mischief to do to men. The devil so leaveth none but he will be attempting to come to them again; and he ordinarily succeeds, where Christ hath not prepossessed the soul. All other reformation proves but a sweeping and a garnishing, while the soul is empty of Christ. It may be swept from the filth of flagitious sins, and garnished with the paint of religion, or some habits of moral virtue; but none of these will keep out the devil. Thus I found it to my cost. For, 1. Satan finding my soul, after all my sad tossings, empty of Christ, returned. 2. And my soul being like the "vineyard of the sluggard," by sloth, defenceless, without its stone wall, he easily found opportunity to sow tares, and, while I slept, to cultivate the thorns and nettles which naturally grow there. 3. It was no hard matter to persuade one so wearied, that "rest was good," and that "there was a lion in the way." And, 4. Having thus possession and quiet abode with his "seven other spirits, (my own corruptions) he quickly made my last state worse than my first." My "enemies grew strong and lively; my corruptions began vigorously to exert themselves."

Upon which the Lord, minding his own work, brought the ministry of the word, the law in its spiritual meaning, nearer. And then, 1. "Sin revived, and I died." I found more discernibly the stirrings of corruptions. Yea, 2. "Sin taking occasion from the commandment," and being fretted by the light let into my soul from the word, "it wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Lusts of all sorts, self, sloth, formality, &c. strove to maintain their own place. 3. Hereby I was plunged in deeper guilt: "Mine iniquities went over my head." And, 4. Hereby my compunctions were sharpened, and I found "no rest in my bones," for the sins that I had done.

Under this distress, I still, as formerly, sought to other physicians, rather than to the Lord. For, 1. Having now, by the knowledge of the truth, "escaped the pollutions of the world;" my exercise was much about the more secret actings of sin, and its workings in the heart; and as to these, I sometimes used extenuations and excuses, taken from the strength of the temptations I lay under, and other considerations of that sort; and sometimes this was done, not without secret reflections on God. This was Adam's way: "The woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me, and I did eat." 2. Sometimes, after my engagements and vows, and breaches of them, when I found conscience disturb me, I began to inquire, whether the things were sin, and endeavoured to persuade myself, that some which were most disturbing were none. Thus, "after vows I made inquiry." 3. I at last, when all these means failed, again said, I will not transgress, and made new vows and resolutions, accompanied with sorrow

for my former breaches, and solemnly bound myself against my sins, those that predominated : “ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once.” 4. I set apart time for fasting and prayer in secret ; and November 23, 1697, on a time set apart for prayer, I drew up a short account of my treacherous dealing with God from my youth up, and solemnly bound myself to God to walk in his ways ; and when my own heart told me, that I could not serve the Lord, I said, “ Nay, but I will serve the Lord.”

But all these proved physicians of no value. For I found, 1. That they were not able to keep me longer from sin than till a temptation came in my way. Whenever this appeared, corruption, that had been so far from being really weakened by all those inventions, that it really grew in strength, broke down all that I had set in its way : “ Of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands ; and thou saidst, I will not transgress : when upon every high hill, and under every green tree, thou wanderest, playing the harlot.” 2. I found those vain methods I took to smother convictions were not able to procure me peace, but really increased my inward disquiet, and wasted my spirits : “ When I kept silence, (that is, when I sinfully endeavoured to suppress my guilt and trouble,) my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long.” 3. The Lord in mercy gave me no rest in any of these inventions, but suffered me to weary myself in seeking my lovers, that I might at length betake myself to him. For so long as I followed these methods, “ day and night his hand lay heavy upon me : my moisture was turned into the drought of summer.”

Though hitherto I failed of a right issue, yet I was carried a great length in compliance with convictions. I kept myself from open pollutions ; I was careful in duties of worship ; yea, further, I was much in secret ; I received “ The word with joy ;” I had often convictions for secret pride, unbelief, and other spiritual heart evils, and, as to the knowledge of them, was considerably enlightened. I fasted, prayed, mourned, in secret ; I resolved and strove against sin, even my peculiar sins that I loved best. Thus I had with others “ a name to live ;” and took up a form of religion.

Yet for all this I was a stranger to its power, which the following evidences sufficiently manifest ; for whatever lengths I went, yet, 1. I was a stranger to the glorious and blessed relief, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ : not that I had not some notions of this ; for I professed to embrace it. But really I was in the dark, as to its glorious efficacy, tendency, and design. I was all the while ignorant of “ the righteousness of God.” 2. Still in all this the “ eye was not single.” It was only the saving of myself, without any eye to the Lord’s glory I designed. 3. It was still by some righteousness of my own, in whole or in part, that I sought relief. No wonder peace was unstable, that stood upon so weak a foundation. 4. Though I was, by the force of convictions, brought to part with my beloved sins, or consent to their destruction ; yet it was neither without reluctance, nor without some secret reserve. It was like Pharaoh’s consent in the like case, when his servants persuaded him of the danger of his persisting in his sin : “ Moses and Aaron were brought back again to Pharaoh : and he said unto them, Go, serve the Lord your God : but who are they that shall go ?” 5. My heart was utterly averse to spirituality, sometimes through the force of convictions. I was indeed

brought for some time to aim at getting my mind fixed upon heavenly things, and kept on the thoughts of them; but my heart being yet carnal, I wearied of this bent, and of this forcible religion: and it was intolerable to think of being always spiritual: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, nor can it indeed be."

By these means I was at last brought to an extremity: For, 1. My "sins were set in order before me."—"Innumerable evils compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs upon my head; therefore my heart faileth me." 2. They were set in order in the dreadfulfulness of their nature and aggravations, and all shifts, extenuations, pleas, and defences were rejected, and my mouth stopped before God. 3. All the vain methods I had taken for my relief, baffled my expectation, and increased my pains: they were "the staff of a broken reed," they pierced my arm, when I attempted to lean upon them; and I was ashamed, and even confounded, that I had hoped. 4. The wrath of God took possession of my soul, and "the poison of his arrows drank up my spirits." 5. I was as yet unsanctified to the truths of religion, and mine enemies often told me, that even "in God there was no succour for me." Yea, 6. At sometimes, Satan, to entangle me more, assaulted all the truths of religion at once, and then I was dreadfully confounded, when the Lord commanded that mine enemies should be round about me: and "they compassed me about like bees." 7. All the ways I took to bear down my corruptions proved of no avail: for "sin revived, and I died;" yea, "taking occasion by the commandment, it slew me."

By the extremity of this anguish, I was, for some time, about the close of 1697, and beginning of 1698, dreadfully cast down. I was weary of my life. Often did I use Job's words, "I loathe it, I would not live always." And yet I was afraid to die: I had no rest, "my sore ran in the night, and it ceased not in the day." "At night I wished for day; and in the day I wished for night." I said, "My couch shall comfort me." But then darkness was as the "shadow of death." When I was in this case, I was often brought to the brink of despair. He filled me with bitterness; he made me drunk with wormwood. "He broke all my teeth with gravel-stones; he covered me with ashes. He removed my soul far from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul had them still in remembrance, and was bowed in me." Now, I was made to think it a wonder that I was not consumed; and though I dreaded destruction from the Almighty, yet I could not but justify him had he destroyed me: "Righteous is the Lord, for I have rebelled." I was made to fear that the Lord would make me a "Magor-missabib, a terror to myself," and all round about; and that he would make some dreadful discovery of my wickedness, that would make me a reproach to religion, and give the enemies advantage, which put me upon the Psalmist's prayer: "Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish." I was made to wonder that I was not already cut off. And indeed this was something reviving: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope." But this hope was easily clouded. It amounted to no more than this, "Who can tell but he may be gracious." And to this my fearful heart suggested the greatness of my sins, as what were above the reach of pardoning mercy.

And Satan daily urged me to give over, and take some desperate course, to say, "There is no hope." Thus I walked about, dejected, weary, and heavy laden, weary of my disease, and weary of the vain methods I had taken for relief, and uncertain what to do, what course to take. "I took counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily."

CHAPTER II.

An Account of the relief I got about the close of January, 1698, and the state of matters thereon.

IF this extremity had lasted much longer, my soul had sunk under the weight of it, and even that, while I was in this case, had ruined me, if the Lord had not secretly supported me in the time of greatest extremity, and, as it were, held me by the hand, even while I acted most wickedly: "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless, thou hast holden me by my right hand." And at this extremity, the Lord interposed, when I had destroyed myself, he let me see help in him. He found me lying wallowing in my blood, in a helpless and hopeless condition. I had none that would, or could save me. I was forsaken of all my lovers. I was caught in the thicket. I was quite overcome; neither was I in a case to fight nor flee. And then the Lord passed by me, cast his skirt over me, and made this "time a time of love." "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

I cannot be very positive about the day or hour of this deliverance, nor can I answer many other questions about the way and manner of it. But this is of no consequence, if the work is in substance sound: For "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Many things about the way and manner we may be ignorant of, while we are sufficiently sure of the effects. As to these things, I must say with the blind man, "I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

However, it was towards the close of January, or the beginning of February, 1698, that this seasonable relief came; and, so far as I can remember, I was at secret prayer in very great extremity, not far from despair, when the Lord seasonably interposed, and gave this merciful turn to affairs: "When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy held me up." And when there was none to save, then his own arm brought salvation. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into my mind, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ."

That which yielded me this relief, was a discovery of the Lord, as manifested in the word. He said to me, "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." Now the Lord discovered, in the manner afterwards to be mentioned, several things of which I shall here take notice. 1. He let me see, that "there is forgiveness with him, that with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption." "He made all his goodness pass before me, and he proclaimed his name, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy

for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, who will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom he will show mercy." This was a strange sight to one who before looked on God only as "a consuming fire," which I could not "see and live." 2. He brought me from Sinai and its thunderings, "to mount Zion, and to the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that cleanseth from all sin, and speaks better things than the blood of Abel." He revealed Christ in his glory: I now with wonder "beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" and I was on this made to say, "Thou art fairer than the Sons of men." 3. On this he let me see, that he who had before rejected all that I could offer, was well pleased in the beloved.—"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." 4. Hereby I was further fully satisfied, that not only there was forgiveness of sins, and justification by free grace, "through the redemption that is in Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." But moreover, I saw with wonder and delight, in some measure, how God by this means might be just in justifying even the ungodly who believe in Jesus. How was I ravished with delight, when made to see, that the God in whom a little before I thought there was no hope for me, or any sinner in my case, if there was any such; notwithstanding his spotless purity, his deep hatred of sin, his inflexible justice and righteousness, and his untainted faithfulness, pledged in the threatenings of the law, might not only pardon, but without prejudice to his justice, or other attributes, be just in justifying even the ungodly! The reconciliation of those seemingly inconsistent attributes with one another, and sinners' salvation quite surprised and astonished me. And, 5. The Lord further opened the gospel call to me, and let me see, that to me, even to me, was "the word of this salvation sent." All this was offered to me, and I was invited secretly to come, and "take of the water of life freely;" and to come in my distress unto this blessed rest; "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest for your souls." 6. He, to my great satisfaction, gave me a pleasant discovery of his design in the whole, that it was "that no flesh might glory in his sight," but that he who glories, should have occasion only "to glory in the Lord," that he might manifest the riches of his grace, and be exalted in showing mercy; and that we at last might be saved, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, who made us accepted in the beloved." 7. The Lord revealed to my soul that full and suitable provision made in this way against the power of sin, that as there is righteousness in him, so there is strength, even "everlasting strength in the Lord Jehovah," to secure me against all my enemies; and that in him there is sweet provision made against the guilt of sin, in which, through the power of temptation, his people may be inveigled: "These things write I to you, that ye sin not: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 8. When this strange discovery was made of relief, wherein full provision was made for all the concerns of God's glory, and my salvation in subordination thereto, my soul was by a glorious and sweet power

carried out to rest in it, as worthy of God, and every way suitable and satisfying in my case: "They that know his name will put their trust in him."

All these discoveries were conveyed to me only by the word. It was not indeed by one particular testimony or promise of the word, but by the concurring light of a great many of the promises and testimonies of the word seasonably set home, and most plainly expressing the truths above-mentioned. The promises and truths of the word, in great abundance and variety, were brought to remembrance; and the wonders contained in them were set before mine eyes in the light of the word: "He sent his word and healed me." "This was the rod of his strength that made me willing." And it was the plain word of salvation that I found to be the power of God. I cannot positively say, that the particular places above-mentioned were the words by which these discoveries were conveyed to my soul; but by these, or such like passages, and, I believe, by many even of those mentioned promises and truths, were the discoveries above-named made to me.

But it was not the word alone that conveyed the discovery; for most of these passages by which I was relieved, I had formerly in my distress read, and thought upon, without finding any relief in them.—But now "the Lord shined into my mind by them." Formerly I was only acquainted with the letter which profits not. But now the Lord's words were spirit and life, "and in his light I saw light;" God opening mine "eyes to see wonders out of his law." There was light in them, a burning light by them shone into my mind, to give me, not merely some notional knowledge, but "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And many differences I found betwixt the discoveries now made, and the notions I formerly entertained of the same truths. 1. It "shone from heaven." It was not a spark kindled by my own endeavours, but it shone suddenly about me, it came by the word of God, a heavenly mean; it opened heaven, and discovered heavenly things, the glory of God, and it led me up as it were to heaven. Its whole tendency was heavenward. 2. It was a true light, giving true manifestations of God, even the one true God, and the one Mediator between God and man; and giving a true view of my estate with respect to God, not according to the foolish conceits I had formerly entertained, but as they are represented in the word. 3. It was a pleasant and sweet light: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." It had a heavenly satisfaction in God attending it. It led to a pleasure in the fountain whence it came. 4. It was a distinct and clear light, representing not only spiritual things, but manifesting them in their glory, and in their comely order; it put all things in their due line of subordination to God, and gave distinct and sweet views of their genuine tendency. 5. It was a satisfying light, the soul rested in the discoveries it made, and was satisfied, it could not doubt of what it saw, or if the things were so as it represented them. 6. It was a quickening, refreshing, healing light; "when the Sun of Righteousness arose, there was healing under his wings." It was like the summer's sun, warming; in a word, it was "the light of life." It was a great light; it made great and clear discoveries, by which it easily distinguished itself from any former knowledge of these things I had attained. 8. It was a powerful light. It dissipated that thick darkness that overspread my mind, and made all those frightful temptations that had formerly disturbed me, fly before it. When the Lord arose, his enemies were scattered, and fled, before his face. 9.

It was composing ; it did not, like a flash of lightning, suddenly appear, and fill the soul only with amazement and fear ; but composed and quieted my soul, and put all my faculties in a due posture, as it were, and gave me the exercise of them. It destroyed not, but improved my former knowledge. These particulars might be explained, and further amplified : but the nature of this narrative, and the brevity designed in it, will not allow me to enlarge ; and I the more willingly stop here, and forbear to give any larger account of my small experience of this light ; because I know that no words can express the notion that the weakest Christian, who has his eyes opened, really has of its glory. The true notion of light is not conveyed by the ear. "The ear tries words, the mouth tastes meats," but it is the "eye that beholds the sun." No words can convey a true notion of light to the blind. And he that has eyes, at least while he sees it, will need no words to describe it. It manifests itself, and other things. It is like the "new name, that none knows, save he who has it." And they who really see, but because their light is weaker, and Satan raises mists to obscure it, will be more capable of judging of it by its effects, than by any accounts of its nature. Therefore I shall forbear to speak any more of that, and now proceed to account for the effects by which its reality, and difference from former light, will more obviously, evidently, and convincingly appear. However, at least while this shining brightness lasted, this one thing it convinced me fully of, and made me certainly know, "that whereas I was blind, now I see."

The first discernible effect of this discovery was, an approbation of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which I take to be the true scriptural notion of justifying faith ; for this not only answers to the scripture descriptions of it by receiving him, coming to him, looking to him, trusting and believing in him, &c. but it really gives him that glory, that he designed by all this contrivance, the glory of his wisdom, grace, mercy, and truth. Now, this discovery of the Lord's name, brought me to trust in him, and glory only in the Lord. I found my soul fully satisfied in these discoveries, as pointing out a way of relief altogether, and in all respects suitable to the need of a poor, guilty, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, driven from all other reliefs, and who has his mouth stopped before God, after he has spent all his substance to no purpose on other physicians. In this I rested as a way full of peace, comfort, security, and satisfaction, as providing abundantly for all those ends I desired to have secured. And this approbation was not merely for a fit, but ever after in all temptations it discovered itself, 1. By keeping me up in a fixed assent, and adherence of mind to, and persuasion of this truth, "That God has given to us eternal life, and this life is only in his Son." 2. When afterwards I was under temptations, solicited to go away and seek relief in other ways, it still kept me constant in a firm resolute rejection of all other ways of relief, and renunciation of all proposals that led to them, even when I found not the present comfort of this way ; I ever held at that with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" and with the disciples, I still said, "To whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." 3. In all my after-exercises about guilt, my soul counted all things but loss, that it might win Christ, and get a new discovery of him. When conscience disturbed, when thoughts of an appearance to judgment were suggested, whenever I was in a strait, this was the only sanctuary in which I took relief: Let me "be found in

him, not having mine own righteousness but his. If this is obtained, I am safe; and nothing besides this could make me think myself so. 4. Whenever the Lord discovered anew the glory of this way, by a beam of fresh light, whatever my distress was before, it still composed all, commanded a calm, answered convictions, and gave me boldness and access to God, with good hope, as to all other things, through grace. Then "I rejoiced in Christ Jesus;" and nothing else was able to disturb me while this view lasted. 5. Whenever I was wrong, yet I still rested satisfied, that the discovery of the Lord in his own light would set all right again. And therefore I was ever at that, "O that I knew where I might find him." I knew, though he might make sin bitter, yet a manifestation of him "would put strength in me," as formerly in sweet experience I had found. 6. I was then only pleased, and could never approve myself; but when I found my soul in some measure moulded into a compliance with the design of the gospel, emptied of self, subjected to the Lord, and careful to have him alone exalted.

The next remarkable effect of this discovery was, that it set me right as to my chief end, in some measure, and made me look to the glory of God, which formerly I had still, in all the courses I took for my own ease, no real concern for. Now mine eye was made in some measure single, in eyeing the Lord's honour, which in this light was seen to be consistent with my own happiness; and my regard to this, wherein that evangelical self-denial, which the Lord everywhere calls for, consists, discovered itself amidst all the strugglings which I afterward found of that detestable idol, self, for obtaining its former room. 1. It manifested itself in frequent desires, that the Lord alone might be exalted and glorified in my life, or by my death. 2. It kept my soul fixed in the persuasion of this, that it was every way meet I should take shame and confusion to myself, as what truly and only belonged to me, and that the glory of my salvation was only and entirely the Lord's due. 3. In a watchful observation of the stirrings and the most secret actings of self, seeking to advance itself upon the ruin of the Lord's honour, and to the prejudice of it; and when I was not able to bear it down, I still cried against it: yea, I redoubled my cries in opposition to its impudent endeavour: "Not unto us, Lord, not to us, but to thy name be the glory." 4. I was brought to look upon it as the principal enemy, on which I was always to have an eye; and, therefore, where the least occasion offered, I had at least, when not otherwise out of case, still a *not I* ready as a caution against it. 5. The remaining felt power and activity of this idol, still has been one of my greatest grievances. 6. I never was satisfied, nor found comfort, but where this idol was discernibly kept under: and no victory is so refreshing, as what at any time is in more or less obtained over this. 7. As the apostles, by the shining of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God into their minds," were made to "preach, not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," so, whenever this light shone, according to the measure of its clearness, and its continuance, the interest of self was weakened in my soul, and I was made to "seek, not myself, but Christ Jesus the Lord."

The evidence of this change was for some time frequently darkened, by which I found, whenever I was again, by the prevalence of sin, convictions thence arising, or the Lord's hiding, brought under any fears of my own salvation, then my thoughts were engrossed, and as it were wholly and only taken up about my own safety, and my concern for the Lord's glory not

then appearing, I was thereby cast under fears that I was altogether selfish: but the Lord at length cleared up this case to me. Our minds are weak; they have many concerns, some of which they value more, some less; they cannot, through their weakness and limited nature, be intent in their thoughts about all, or even many of them, at once. And therefore, when any one, though the least of them, is in hazard, their care must be taken up mainly, and as it were about that only. Even the good shepherd, though really he values the ninety and nine more than the one lost sheep, yet when it is lost, he seems to leave all the rest, and employ all his thoughts as it were about that. But when all are equally safe, and none of our concerns are in any visible hazard, then is the only proper time to judge what is really uppermost in the soul; that which it then is most frequently with, delights most in, and can least think of parting with, that is uppermost. That which has the heart is the treasure. And the Lord let me see that my soul was, when all was safe, almost wholly taken up in viewing with delight the manifestations of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Before I proceed to take notice of any other effects of this discovery, I shall state, in a few particulars, the pleasant way by which the Lord carried on this change as to the chief end. 1. When the Lord came to work this change, I was sunk under the oppressive sense of this, that I had "destroyed myself;" and deeply concerned to know how I might be saved. 2. The Lord made me first look up, by a discovery of salvation and help, which answered my concern about my own case. 3. When I looked to this salvation, I found it in him. 4. When by this means I came to see his glory shining in the contrivance for my salvation, I was affected so by the lustre of it, that I began to value it above all things, and look on it as of that importance, that, provided it were secured, all other things, the highest concerns of the creature not excepted, were of small moment. 5. And herein viewing the glory of his goodness in ordering it so, that the creatures, in aiming at his glory, should find their own salvation; this endeared the Lord and his ways exceedingly. Thus the Lord sweetly led me, by a view of help suited to my case, to a discovery of his glory in my salvation, helping me to place things in some measure, at least, in wish and design, in their own order, and give his glory the pre-eminence that was its due.

A third discernible effect of this discovery was with respect to the Lord's yoke, his precepts; beholding his glory, I was changed into his image, and made to look on his yoke as easy, and his burden as light; and to count that "his commandments were not grievous, but right concerning all things." This was very far contrary to my former temper. Now the reality of this change appeared, and evidenced itself, even amidst all temptations, slips, yea, and relapses into the same sins, several ways. 1. I now came to a fixed persuasion that the law was not only just, such against which I could make no reasonable exception, but holy; such as became God, and good; such as every way was suited to my true interest, and peace, and advantage, which I could never think before. 2. Though I found sin that dwells in me, opposing still, yet I delighted after the inward man in "the law, as holy, just, spiritual, and good." 3. I saw the commandment to be exceeding broad, spiritual, and extensive, and was delighted with it. 4. The duties that my heart had the greatest aversion to formerly, were now made easy, pleasant, and refreshing. Formerly I could not think spiritual-mindedness could be easy to me or any other; but now,

when I attained it in some measure, for some time, as first after this discovery I did, I found it life and peace; and, on the contrary, carnal-mindedness was as death. 5. I was made to see a peculiar beauty in those laws in particular that crossed those sins which had the firmest footing in my temper, and the greatest advantage from my circumstances, and occasional temptations. And though all these advantages still continued, and rather grew, yet my heart was so strangely altered, that no sins were so hateful; upon account of none did I loathe myself so much; over no sins was I so glad of victory, or longed so much for the ruin of, or did I cry so much against, or complain so frequently of to the Lord, and set myself more against: my mind was continually engaged in contrivances for their ruin, which formerly I sought still to have spared. And if the Lord would have given me it in my choice, to have the laws that crossed them razed, or to let them stand, he knows I would have thought the law less pleasant, less perfect if these had been wanting. Thus, "what things were gain, I now counted loss," and endeavoured "to keep myself from mine iniquity;" and I could never think myself happy till these were plucked out, which were before as "the right eye." 6. I took delight in others, or in myself, only in so far as there appeared any thing of a self-denied, humble conformity to the law of the Lord; such I counted as "the excellent of the earth;" and I was glad when I got near them in any the meanest instance. 7. My soul frequently spent itself in such breathings after conformity to the law of God, as the 119th Psalm is filled with throughout: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! my heart breaketh, through the longing it hath to thy commands at all times; incline my heart, that I may keep them always unto the end," and the like. 8. This appeared further in a fixed dislike of the least want of conformity to the law, either in myself or others. Now, though I was not always suitably affected with my own or others' breaches, yet this was my burden, I wished always that "rivers of tears might run down my eyes, because I (or other transgressors) keep not God's law." 9. Even when sin prevailed, and I was afraid to be ruined when that "which was ordained for life," proved death to me, even then my liking to the law, and value for conformity, continued; all this notwithstanding, I consented to the law, that it was "holy, just, and good." 10. The sins into which, through the force of temptation, I frequently relapsed, yet remained, and I durst appeal to the Searcher of hearts as to the truth of this, what I would not do; that is, what the constant bent of my will (when not under the immediate force of a temptation, when I was not myself) was set against. 11. Now, nothing appeared more satisfactory in heaven, than a prospect of being there "satisfied with his likeness." 12. I looked on the remainder of sin as my greatest misery and burden, and that which made me truly a "wretched man," and daily cry for deliverance. In a word, I saw, that if I could reach conformity to God's law, I would have pleasure, and peace, and liberty. All wisdom's ways are "ways of peace, her paths pleasantness, her commandments not grievous;" her yoke light, and nothing uneasy, but that remaining unsubdued corruption, that would not stoop to put its neck under the yoke. 'This effect was the most discernible of any under temptations, and has stood me in the best stead.

A fourth discernible effect of this discovery, was the exercise of evangelical repentance, which was very different in many respects from that sorrow I before was acquainted with. 1. In its rise sorrow formerly flowed

from discoveries of sin, as it brings on wrath; now it flowed from a sense of sin, as containing wretched unkindness in one, who was astonishingly kind to an unworthy wretch. I looked upon him "whom I had pierced, and mourned." O! what an unkind wretch am I, to provoke such a God, who has followed me with so much mercy, and yet offers kindness! 2. Sorrow formerly wrought death, alienated my heart from God, and so dispirited me for duty, and made me fear hurt from him: but this sorrow filled my heart with kindness to God; to his way, sweetened my soul, and endeared God to it. It flowed from a sense of his favour to an unworthy wretch that deserved none, and was thus a godly sorrow, leading to kindness to God, drawing near to him, but with much humble sense of my own unworthiness, like the returning prodigal, when he saw his father coming to meet him. 3. The more God manifested of his kindness, the more this still increased; when he was pacified, I was ashamed and confounded. "After I was turned, I repented; I smote upon my breast, and was ashamed and confounded" for my strayings. 4. The sorrow I had before, I looked on as a burden, was nothing but a selfish concern for my own safety, and a fear of being made to feel the effects of the righteous resentment of God. But this sorrow was sweet and pleasant, as being the exercise of filial gratitude; and I took pleasure in the surprising manifestations of God's favour to one so unworthy, and in acknowledging my own unworthiness. A sense of my ingratitude, when kept within, covered me with blushes; and I was eased when the Lord allowed me to vent my sense of it, and pour it, as it were, in his bosom. 5. This sorrow was a spring of activity in the way of duty, and I was glad to be employed in the meanest errand, that I might give opportunity to evidence how deeply I resented my former disobedience: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." 6. In a word, it had all the marks, in some measure, which the apostle gives of the exercise of this grace. It was a godly sorrow, coming from God; it led to God, as always what comes from him in a way of grace, leads to him in a way of duty: "It wrought repentance unto life, not to be repented of;" it issued in a return to the way of life, and to such a course as upon a review I did not repent of, but delighted in, and desired to be carried further on in. And still, in as far as this sorrow obtained, there was a liveliness in following this way, that leads to salvation or life. It wrought carefulness to avoid sin, and please God, indignation against sin, fear of offending God again, vehement desire of having sin removed, the Lord glorified, and obedience promoted: it wrought zeal for God and revenge against myself and sin. It was not, as former sorrow, pregnant with pride, stiffness, and unwillingness to undergo any chastisement; but it humbled, softened the soul, and wrought a willingness to bear the indignation of the Lord when I had sinned against him. In a word, I was glad when the Lord allowed me any measure of it, and grieved when I found it wanting; and cried to the "Prince exalted" for it, because of the good effects it had, and the real advantage I found by it, with respect to the whole of that obedience the Lord requires.

A fifth discernible effect of this discovery was, an humble, but sweet and comfortable hope, and persuasion of my own salvation, answerable to the clearness of this discovery; that is rising in strength, or growing more weak, and less discernible, as the discoveries of the way of salvation were more or less clear and strong. Now, because this is what I take for gospel-assurance, with the worthy Dr Owen, I shall give some further account of it.

as I found it then and since. 1. When the Lord gave this discovery of his way of salvation, he satisfied me, that it was a way full of peace and security, the only safe way on which I might safely venture; and hereby, as I mentioned formerly, I was fully persuaded, that "this was the way wherein I should walk." Hereby I was freed from that disquieting fear, that, in trusting to it, I was trusting to that which would fail. I was satisfied I could not fail otherwise than by missing this way; I doubted of myself, but not of the way. 2. The Lord, by the discovery above mentioned, did powerfully draw my soul to close with it: and, in so far as I clave to, and closed with this, in so far, considering the former discovery of the safety of this way, I could not doubt of the issue, but was sweetly satisfied, that my "expectation should not be cut off," nor my labour in vain in pursuing this course. While I cleaved to, and reposed with satisfaction on what I was convinced was safe, I could not, in so far as I leaned to this, but be quiet and composed about the issue; which shows how nearly allied faith and assurance are, though they are not the same; and therefore no wonder that the one should be taken for the other. 3. Hereby I was animated to walk on in this way, and follow duty; and finding, as I went on in duty, that so far as I proceeded, my expectation was not disappointed, still, according to success, this hope insensibly and secretly grew. This God "is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." 4. This discovery manifesting salvation in a way of self-denial, and trust only in the Lord, nothing so soon marred this hope, as the last appearance of self, and stirring of pride. Whenever the glory of the Lord was revealed, and he spake peace, I was hereon filled with shame, and the deeper this humiliation was, still the humble confidence of my safety increased. Now, these two last remarks show, how far this assurance is from any consistency with negligence; much less does it foster it, for it grows only upon adherence to the Lord's way, and is strengthened by a successful pursuit of salvation in the Lord's way. To intermit or neglect duty, razes the foundation, or at least lays an insurmountable barrier in the way of its progress and growth. And further, it is widely different from that untroubled confidence some pretend to, which is a fruit of pride, and fosters it, as the last remark shows. In a word, the case is plainly thus: this way the Lord discovers, is safe for a self-condemned sinner. I am safe in a practical adherence to it. The further I go, and the closer I in practice cleave to this way, hope of his salvation increases the more. Here is no place for sloth, but a spur to diligence, because it will not be in vain in the issue, and is attended with the comfort in every step, of drawing still nearer the desired salvation. And this safety arising from a renunciation of all confidence in the flesh, and a trust only in the sovereign grace of God, through Christ, there is no place for confidence in ourselves, or pride in any degree: the least degree of pride being a step out of this way of peace and safety.

A sixth discernible difference was with respect to the ordinances of the Lord's appointment. This discovery, 1. Drew me to follow them as the Lord's institutions, and appointed means of obtaining discoveries of his beauty. 2. It made me follow after discoveries of the Lord's glory in them, and discoveries from him of myself, my case, my sin, my duty. I desired to behold the "beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." 3. It sent me to the Lord to seek these discoveries from him, and to pray with respect both to myself, and those concerned in the dispensation of the gospel: "One thing have I desired of the Lord." 4. This was now more con-

stant, I desired and sought after it. 5. I was brought to more of liveliness, when the Lord discovered himself, "my soul then followed hard after him;" when his hand upheld me, and when he drew, I ran. 6. When the Lord enlarged, and caused me to approach to him, and see his glory, he still humbled me, discovered self, and put me in opposition to it. I have seen him, and therefore I loathed myself. 7. I was now acquainted in some measure with that boldness and freedom of access, with humble confidence in God, as on a throne of grace, manifesting himself in Christ. In a word, I was sensible of the Lord's hiding and manifesting himself in duty in some measure, and of the necessity of the exercise of grace, particularly of faith, in all approaches to God, and thereby put upon frequent complaints, dejections for the want of it, cries to God for it, and the like.

Many other effects followed upon this discovery, too long to repeat at large. 1. Herein I found a new, and formerly unknown love to all that seemed to have any thing of the Lord's image, however different in principles as to lesser things, tempers, &c. and though distant and unknown otherwise than by report. And this evidencing itself in prayer for them, sympathy with them in their afflictions, which as all the other, still was more or less lively, according as I was otherwise in worse or better case: "By this do we know we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." 2. Hereon I found my care of all the Lord's concerns enlarged, and I began to be desirous to have the Lord exalted on the earth—Zion prosper, and all that love her: I was fearful of hazard that threatened any of his interests, affected with the sufferings of his people, or any loss his interest sustained. 3. Hereon I began to be more concerned for any affronts offered to the Lord's glory by others: "I saw transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not God's law;" and was oft made to weep, and pray for them in secret. 4. I found it easy and delightful to suppress resentments, and oppose them, and even to pray for those whom I apprehended to have injured me. Yea, with delight I could seek their good, their real good, and pray earnestly for it. Other consequences of this discovery will be mentioned hereafter, in their proper places.

To conclude this chapter, I found this discovery sweetly drawing to a willing, cheerful endeavour after holiness, in all manner of conversation. Whereas, all former courses I took, only drove me forcibly to a feigned submission; which made me often wonder at the folly of Socinians and Arminians, and other Pelagian enemies, who pretend, that free justification leads to security and carelessness. I could not but say and think often, What! shall I believe such wild and wicked reproaches against my clear experience? Do not I find quite the contrary, while the "love of Christ constrains to judge thus, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that they who henceforth live, should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them. They err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

Thus all things were in some measure made new; and I, who, a little before, with the jailer, had fallen down trembling, was now raised up, and set down to feast with the disciples of the Lord "rejoicing and believing." But, alas! I was like the disciples on the mount, I dreamed not of what was abiding me, as the sequel will show. This I desire to recount, however, with thankfulness, not to my own commendation, but "to the praise of the glory of his grace." How far was I from having attained, or being already perfect, the following pages will show.

CHAPTER III.

An Account of the Pleasure of my Case at this time, the Mistakes I was still under, the sad Effects of them, and the way of their discovery.

THIS glorious discovery was very surprising, and filled me with wonder. Often was I made to stand and wonder what this strange sight meant, and whereto it would turn: things that I had not heard, were told me. Often did I say, "What hath the Lord wrought!" "When God turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like men that dreamed. Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." The greatness of the things God hath done surpassed belief; and yet the great and clear light wherein they were discovered, and the discernible effects, would not allow me to doubt.

Although the effects of this discovery above mentioned, were most discernible at first, yet, I did not then, nor till after that light was gone, distinctly observe them. For, 1. The glory of the Lord was so great, that for a time, I only fixed my eyes upon that, and I was less intent, though much pleased with it, upon the change that was thereby wrought on me. All this while I was still crying out, "Whence is this to me?" And "what am I, and what is my father's house," that the Lord has visited me, and brought me hitherto? Again, 2. I was the less sensible, or at least was the less distinct, in observing these things, because of the remaining darkness as to the many and great things contained in the covenant of grace. This light clearly revealed the mystery of free justification through Christ, and peace by his blood; but I was afterward to learn other things belonging to the mystery of redemption. This was what I at present needed, and this the Lord gave abundantly, in so far as the present case required it. But yet, after this glorious light had remained some considerable time with me, I was sadly ignorant of many of the most important things relating even to the mystery of forgiveness, the daily use of this atonement, and the use especially of the Lord Christ with respect to sanctification. Well might Christ say to me, many a day after this, as to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" What, therefore, the Lord had done at this time, I knew not now, but hereafter, when the comforter had further instructed me in the nature of the gospel discovery, as I was able to bear it, and as my daily exigencies required it; and when, with Peter, being come to myself, recovered out of the strange surprise, and put to consider the thing, then knew I, with him, more distinctly what concerned the Lord's work, and what he had done for me.

This discovery, while it lasted, was full of ravishing sweetness, and many things contributed very much to make it so. 1. The case wherein it found me: I was condemned by God, by my own conscience, and was like to sink under the pressure of the fear of a present execution of the sentence. When the usual labours of the day required that I should sleep, and my body, toiled and wasted with the disquiet of my mind, made me heavy, and urged it more: yet I was afraid to close mine eyes, lest I should awaken in hell; and durst not let myself sleep, till I was by a weary body

beguiled into it, lest I should drop into the pit before I was aware. Was it any wonder that the news of pardon and forgiveness were sweet to one in such a case? whereby I was made to lie down in safety, and take quiet rest, where there was none to make me afraid. "For so giveth he his beloved sleep." A little before, I was like Jonah in the whale's belly: "The waters compassed me about even to the soul; the deep closed me round about; the weeds were wrapt about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever." "And I said, I am cast out of God's sight." Now, was it any wonder that such a one was delighted when brought into a garden of delights? placed out of all view of trouble, except a reflection on it as passed, which is refreshing, and set down to warm himself, and dry himself under the refreshing rays of the Sun of Righteousness. 2. The things that the Lord discovered were in themselves glorious; the glory of the Lord shone about me: I saw such things as "eye hath not seen, besides thee, O God." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten of the Father, he hath declared him." In a word, what I saw was the "mystery of godliness;" the wonders of God's law, which the angels stooping earnestly look into, and that with wonder. 3. They were new things, with which I was utterly unacquainted before; and this made them the more affecting: "He shall sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." "As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Again, 4. The light wherein these things were discovered, was a clear sparkling light, that had a warming force, and reviving influence, that I was altogether a stranger to before: and one that was a stranger to light, at least to this light of the Lord, could not but with pleasure enjoy it; for truly "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

This discovery and manifestation was of a much longer continuance, and far more bright than any I ever since obtained; for it shone in its brightness, for about ten days, and for long after that, it was not quite off: and while it lasted, many things made it observable. 1. New discoveries were daily made; the Lord carried me from one thing to another, and in this short time taught me more than by all my study I had learned before, in quite a different manner; what naturally and notionally I knew before, I corrupted myself in it; but now the Lord "instructed me with a strong hand, that I should not walk in this way,"—"and day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge." Every day I was surprised with some new, and before unthought-of discovery of the Lord. This was as "the shining light, shining more and more to a perfect day." All this time my mind was almost wholly taken up about spiritual things; my "conversation was in heaven." I saw those with whom I conversed, turn every thing (even what was not only innocently, but piously said and meant) into obscene senses: whereas now, whatever occurred in reading, in meditation, in converse, in daily observation, was by and to my mind spiritualized. I reflected with wonder on this difference, and often, during this time, I was made to look on the mind, as a mould that casts whatever is brought into it, into its own shape: "To the pure, all things are pure: but to them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." 3. By this I was not only joyful, but I found the "joy of the Lord my strength," for all this while I was

carried out to extraordinary pleasure, and diligence in duty. It was not now, as formerly, a burden to go to duty; but I rejoiced when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of God." And my soul answered, I will go to God my chief joy, "to God that performeth all things for me." My heart was enlarged, and I "ran in the way of God's commandments" with delight. Willingly I engaged in duty; and when I was engaged in it, "my soul oft made me like the chariots of Ammi-na-lib," and I was not easily stopped; but failed sometimes as to the just bounds, whereby others, that felt not that ravishing sweetness I enjoyed, were sometimes disgusted, though some were not, for so near as I can reckon, it was about this time that the Lord began to commend himself and his worship to Lady Anne Elcho, which made her at death bless the Lord for family-worship. 4. The Lord daily instructed me all this time out of the Scriptures, and my heart burned within me while he talked and walked with me "by the way, and opened the Scriptures," which before were as a sealed book, in which whatever I read was dark; even that whereof I had some notion: I was ready to say of it, "I cannot read it, for it is sealed." The design, intent, and mystery, was hid from me, and the rest of it I was forced to say, I knew nothing of, I was not learned. Again, 5. Mine enemies received a stunning stroke, and all of a sudden, by the appearance of the sun, those frightful things that disturbed me in the dark disappeared. He graciously for a time restrained them, and bore down corruption, chained up Satan, and kept me from any disturbance by these enemies; with whom I have before had, and since likewise, many sad wrestlings: "At the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed." When the Lord arose, "his enemies were scattered. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings and discomfited them." Thus "he delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me." 6. Which was the life of all the former, the Lord by keeping his glory continually in mine eye, kept me all this while more humble and self-denied than ever, seeing him, I loathed and detested self. Beholding his glory, I was in mine own eyes "as a grasshopper, as nothing, less than vanity and nothing, and gloried only in the Lord, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh."

The Lord had many gracious designs in this, which I was ignorant of then, as what I shall speedily narrate will show; but the Lord has in some measure since taught me, some of which I shall here narrate. 1. I was sore wounded and broken before, and the Lord did this in tenderness. He bound up my wounds; he poured in oil; he made a bed in my sickness; he watched me, and kept me free from disturbance, till I was somewhat strengthened. 2. I had been plunged into grievous and hard thoughts of him, as one who had "in anger shut up his tender mercies, and forgotten to be gracious;" and I was not easily induced to believe good tidings, for I had forgotten prosperity; and though it was told me, I could not believe, partly for joy, and partly for fear, till I got a clear sight of the waggons and provisons, and then my spirit revived; and the Lord satisfied me in deep condescension, that he was real, and earnest, and had no pleasure in my death; and that the wound was not incurable; that it was not the wound of an enemy, or the stroke of a cruel one, but the wound of a friend in order to healing. 3. He was now to make me sell all for the pearl. And, like a fair merchant that means not to cheat, he let me see both what I was to

leave, and what I was to choose, that I might be satisfied I had made a good bargain : and though many a day I have seen neither sun, nor moon, nor stars since, and have been in the deep day and night ; yet so far did this go, that I durst never once in wish retract my choice. 4. He knew what a wilderness I had to go through, and therefore led me not into that long and weary journey till he had made me eat once and again, as he did by Elijah. 5. The Lord did not at first plunge me into war, lest I should have repented my engagement : “ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines although that was near : for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” 6. The Lord hereby undeceived me as to my hard thoughts of his ways, and reproved me for them : often was I put to say, Lord, “ I was as a beast ;” and how brutish was I to think that spirituality was a burden, and that it was impossible to be so one day to an end without weariness ? Thus he let me see, that I “ uttered what I understood not ;” and though once I had so spoken, yet now I durst not proceed. For I saw what with man is impossible, with God is possible and easy : he can change the heart, and then the thoughts change. Finally, The Lord designed to give me something that might, in all after-trials, be staying ; and often has the remembrance of this been sweet, when present sense failed. I called to mind “ the years of the right hand of the Most High,” and was still supported by it.

But, alas ! I understood not this, and by my ignorance I was cast into sad mistakes. 1. I fancied this world would last always ; I ravingly talked of tabernacles, with the disciples on the mount. I knew not that I was to come down, and that my dearest Lord was to depart from me again ; “ In my prosperity I said, My mountain stands strong by thy favour, and I shall never be moved.” 2. I dreamed no more of fighting with corruptions ; but thought that the enemies that appeared not were dead, that the Egyptians were all drowned in the sea ; and that I should never learn, nor have occasion for learning war. 3. I resolved to impose such restraints upon myself, and confine myself to such a course of walking, as neither our circumstances, temptations, nor our duty in this world allow. I remember, I could not endure to read those books which were really proper and necessary to be read, and all the time employed in them I reckoned as lost. This was the old legal temper beginning to work again, and secretly inclining me to seek righteousness, not directly as before, “ but as it were by the works of the law,” and aiming to entangle me by a yoke of bondage. Yea, I began to grudge and feel compunction about the time spent in necessary refreshment of the body by meat and sleep, and endeavoured to abridge myself. The devil secretly drove me from one extreme to another ; and he knew full well that I would not hold here, and that he would easily get me cast into another extreme, to assume a latitude beyond what was due. Thus I was well nigh entangled in that yoke of bondage which the Lord had so lately broken, and deceived into a voluntary humility and mortification, being vainly puffed up to it by my fleshly mind. 4. I began to count upon enlargement and success in duty, as what was not only my due, but what I should always have, and that it was more mine own than really it was. I began to speak of it with delight ; like the disciples, I said, “ Lord, even the devils are subject to us.” 5. I looked upon this stock of grace I had obtained, as what would be sufficient to carry me through all my difficulties ; and saw not that the grace that was sufficient was yet in the Lord’s hand.

But now the Lord quickly undeceived me ; for, 1. After a little, he began to hide himself. 2. He gave “ me a thorn in the flesh to humble me.” My corruptions began to stir again, and, like giants refreshed by wine, to make furious assaults. 3. A messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me, and I began to feel the fury of his temptations.

On this I was cast into great perplexity ; 1. I fell into deep sorrow : “ Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” 2. I began to question the truth of former manifestations, and to say, with the disciples, “ We thought it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.” 3. I began to doubt of my steadfast adherence, and to say, “ One day I shall perish by the hand of Saul.” And, 4. I began to quarrel secretly with the Lord, as if he had deceived me, and to say, Why hast thou not delivered me ? Why is my bondage increased since thou began to appear for my deliverance ?

Under this condition, I tried all means, but ran often to wrong ways. 1. I complained, and then my soul was overwhelmed. 2. “ I thought upon God ;” but not finding the discoveries as before, “ I was troubled.” 3. I inquired into the causes of this : “ Wherefore hidest thou thy face ? Why art thou so far from helping ?” But here my spirit often began to go too far, and even to say, “ Wilt thou be always as a liar, and as waters that fail ?” And then I retracted, and was sunk deeper for my wickedness in chiding with God. 4. I endeavoured to shake myself and to go to duty as before : “ I wist not the Lord was departed ;” that my locks were shaven, and that the enemy that lay in my bosom, had discovered my strength, and got between me and it.

On this I was exceeding melancholy, and so much the more, that now I remembered all my goodly pleasant things I enjoyed before I “ fell into the enemy’s hands.” But yet, when after the violence of my conflict, I recovered myself, I could not but see that things were better at my worst state, than formerly in my best. For, 1. The Lord gave frequent manifestations of his countenance : “ he showed himself at the windows, and at the lattices ;” and sometimes “ put in his hand by the hole of the door, and spoke kindly ; and my bowels were moved for him.” 2. He frequently let me see somewhat of his “ power and glory in the sanctuary ;” opened a Scripture, and made my heart burn ; or unfolded my case, and “ told me all that was in my heart ;” or let me see the end of my enemies. 3. Sometimes he allowed me access to him, and made me come even to his seat, and “ pour out my soul to him.” 4. When I was at my lowest, I stood otherwise affected to Christ than before. Though I could not run after him, yet I unwillingly staid away : “ My soul longed after him ;” “ when wilt thou come ?” I frequently breathed for my affections being drawn out. “ Draw me, and I will run after thee.” Sometimes I attempted to stretch out the withered hand, and wished for the command that would empower me to lay hold on him ; I still held to this, that salvation only is to be found in him. I refused to go anywhere else, but resolved to wait on ; and though he should “ slay me, yet trust in him ” I would. 5. As to the law of the Lord, though I could not run as when my heart was enlarged, yet my will still tended that way ; I longed to walk, and run, and for that enlargement that would make me run ; I breathed after conformity to it ; I had no quarrel at it, but with myself : “ I delighted in the law after the inward man.” 6. As to sin, there was a great difference ; though I could not delight in duty as before, I abhorred thoughts of delighting in sin ; I was

sometimes, by the power of temptation, driven to consent to its seductions; but it was just such a forced consent, as, by the power of conviction, I before gave to the law. Whenever I came to myself, I retracted it: "My repentings were kindled within me." Though it prevailed, my heart was not with it as before. I found another sort of opposition made to it; it was dead in purpose and design; and if it gained victory, I was the more enraged against it: in a word, as to the law of God, I was as a sick man, with his friends sitting at his bed-side; he has no aversion to them, though he cannot delight in them as before; he reflects with such a pleasure, as his present case allows, upon the satisfaction he has had in their converse, and wishes to be in a condition for enjoying it again; but I was quite different with respect to sin. Finally, This deadness was now a preternatural state; I could not rest in it, but cried daily, "When wilt thou revive me?" I loathed myself for it; I wearied, I endeavoured to break prison; I looked back to former seasons, when it had been otherwise, and often said, "O that it were with me as in months past!"

CHAPTER IV.

An Account of my Strugglings with Indwelling Sin, its Victories, the Causes of them on my part, and God's Goodness with respect to this Trial.

I HAD not been long in this pleasant case, before I found my mistake, that enemies were not foiled, and that I must down into the valley, and "wrestle with principalities and powers;" and fight with no less enemies than the Anakims! My corruptions, self, passion, &c. and especially those "sins which easily beset me," which formerly I was so careful to have spared, and which I refused to deliver up to justice, set upon me. And finding that I was now no more theirs as formerly, they frequently vanquished me; I often fell before them, and multiplied relapses: "When I would do good, evil was present with me," and the good I would do, through their power, "I did not, and the evil I would not do, that I did." Thus I learned, that the difference betwixt the Lord's people and others is not simply in this, that the one falls, and the other stands, but that there is a difference in the issue; "The just man falleth seven times a day, but the wicked shall fall into mischief."

Now though I was unwilling to fight, I drew to my armour upon the appearance of these enemies, who received great advantage by that security into which I had fallen. And before ever I was aware, they received a great advantage, and I could not easily get from them again. But however, since fight I must, I tried what weapons would be most successful. And,

1. I objected to them, that now I had no more to do with them; I had engaged with the Lord.
2. I endeavoured to reason against them, as Joseph did, but without his faith; "Shall I do this great evil, and sin against God?"
3. When they still persisted, I endeavoured to flee from them, and avoid the occasions: but the enemy was in my bosom.
4. I prayed against them, that the Lord would rebuke them.
5. I complained of them as his enemies,
6. I protested against them. And many other ways did I try.

But, after all, they persisted, and I was often foiled; and on this I fell

into grievous discouragements. And, 1. I began to doubt if I was sincere, or if the Lord was really with me: "If the Lord be with us, why is all this evil come upon us?" 2. I began to doubt of the issue, and conclude I should one day perish by their hand. 3. My conscience being defiled, I was discouraged, and could not look up to God. And, upon the whole, I was in very great distress, often at giving over.

Though I often searched at the time, I could not discover whence it was that I failed. For almost no mean that I then thought of I left unattempted. But since, several reasons of the prevalency of sin, and the unsuccessfulness of my attempts against it, has the Lord graciously discovered, though I am far from thinking to discover them all, or pretending to remember even all that the Lord hath discovered, yet some of them I shall mention, that now occur. 1. I was in the beginning of this warfare, too confident in grace already received, laid too much stress on it, and promised too much from my own hand, like Peter: and no wonder I met with his fate, and was left to make discoveries of my own weakness. 2. The subtle enemies I had to do with took me in the midst of my weaknesses, and I was not watchful against, nor aware of the seasons when they had special advantage. The thief knew his time when the goodman is from home, and all is quiet. And I did not watch; and therefore he came in an hour when I looked not for him. 3. My enemies put me upon vain work, where the sin lay, not in the thing itself, but in the degree of it, there my subtle enemies put me to strive against, and seek to eradicate what was really in itself lawful. Of this I had many instances with respect to passions, and worldly employments, and converse with sinful people. I remembered not, that if we were altogether withdrawn from converse with the idolaters, fornicators, &c. of this world, we must needs go out of the world. And as there was an anger to be avoided, so there was an anger that was allowable, and even duty required that we should be angry: but so as to avoid sin. Thus Satan tempted me to provoke God, by aiming at things which were neither given of God, nor had I any reason to expect them, and thus to tempt God, by seeking stones to be made bread, of things not meet to be done. Like the Stoics, I was not content to have the passions kept in their own order, but would have them eradicated. Thus the devil drives to extremes; and when we fail of success, he thence takes occasion to discourage us. 4. I still neglected some means of God's appointment, under pretence of inconveniences and difficulties, and sometimes because irksome to the flesh; whereas these were oftentimes the only proper means that were omitted, or at least the principal in that case. The omission of one thing ruins much, and our apologies and excuses will not do. Some particular sins require particular remedies: when God has appointed the use of these, and this is omitted, no wonder all others fail. When the disciples asked, wherefore they could not cast the devil out, our Lord told them, there were some kinds that went not out, "but by fasting and prayer." Whenever any mean is appointed by God, when the case occurs, wherein it is requisite, the remedy of God's appointment must be used, if we would reach the end. If there are supposed or real difficulties, yet while these difficulties are not our sin, we have reason to trust him as to these, and try the means. 5. I was often slothful, and by drowsiness a man is clothed with rags, and enemies may easily sow tares when men are asleep. 6. Above all, I was little acquainted with the way of faith's improvement of Christ for sanctification, and constant application to the throne of grace

for supplies to help in time of need. 7. I was sometimes not single in my aims : I designed to have a victory that would relieve me of the trouble of watchfulness. I was weary of such a warfare, and would have been at ease, and had too much of an eye to this, and such like aims ; and perhaps if I had got leave to rest, I would have been too proud of my success : Thus “ we ask and receive not, because we ask amiss, to consume it on our lusts.” 8. When I was not presently heard, I did not persevere in prayer for the supplies of grace that I sought. Thus I often found, that so long as I was with the Lord, he was with me ; “ They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength”—but I was too soon over with it. And from these and the like causes did my want of success proceed.

Yet, notwithstanding all these dreadful miscarriages on my part, the Lord, in the heat of this conflict, and even while I was many ways faulty, was very kind. 1. He kept me from giving quite over, though I fell, yet I was not quite cast down. 2. When I had many times been nearly overcome with temptations, he came in with seasonable help, and passing over all my miscarriages, he helped me up, let me see that he kept me from being quite overcome, and gave me some assurances for the future. Thus “ foolish was I, and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee ; thou hast holden me by my right hand : thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and receive me to glory.” 3. I had gracious experiences of the Lord’s helping in the time of need, and hearing my cries. The Lord sometimes interposed when I was overcome, and sent, as it were, an Abigail, to keep me from executing my wicked purposes ; sometimes he gave me an entire victory, and strengthened me to repel temptations : and many other ways did he help and deliver me. 4. He sometimes, and even very frequently when I was hard beset, cleared up my sincerity, and gave me such a view of it, as emboldened me to appeal to him, which freed me of that temptation, and left me at liberty, under the advantage of this new encouragement, to oppose more vigorously. “ Do not I hate all them that hate thee ? I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies.” And hereby I was not emboldened to sin, I durst not take encouragement to sin, because grace abounded, though motions were made this way by my wicked heart ; but I was made more afraid of offending. These, and many other ways, was the Lord kind in the conflict ; he frequently said to me, “ Fear not, surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.”

The Lord has since let me see what gracious designs he carried on by this trial, and what need there was of it in order both to his glory and my good. 1. By this he taught me the nature of that state in which we are here, that it is a wilderness, a warfare, and that we must all be soldiers, if we mean to be Christians. 2. He taught me hereby, that the grace that is sufficient for us, is not in our hands, but in the Lord’s ; and that therefore our security with respect to future temptations, is not grace already received, but in this, that there is enough in the promise, and the way patent to the throne of grace for it. 3. He taught me, that God is the sovereign disposer, and gives out as he sees meet in time of need, his own grace, and he is the only judge of the proper season of giving it out. 4. He led me to discern somewhat more of the covenant of grace, that in it there are no promises made of absolute freedom from sin while we are here : “ If any man say he has no sin, he is a liar ;” and that we have no promise of freedom from gross sins, and these sins wherein we have been formerly entang-

led, but in the use and diligent use, of the means of the Lord's appointment: "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 5. Hereby he taught me that great lesson, that "when I am weak (in myself,) then I am strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Whenever I was diffident of myself, I was then always victorious, or at least came off without hazard, which is very far different from what men generally think, that when a man is diffident and distrusts himself, that then he is not fit for managing any other undertaking; and this is indeed true when he is carnally diffident. But when there is a distrust of self, with an eye to the Lord, it is very far otherwise. 6. He taught me the use, and necessity, and glory of that provision that is made by the covenant of grace for guilt; it writes to us all to dissuade us from, and enable us to prevail against sin: "But if any man sin," through the power of temptation, it lets us see "an Advocate with the Father, and blood that cleanseth from all sin." 7. He let me see his holy jealousy, and how displeased he was with me for my cleaving to sin so long, and sinful forbearance. Because I would not slay them as the Lord appointed me, and when he required it, therefore he left them like the nations of Canaan, to tempt and to try me. The sins that now molested me, and frequently cast me down, were those that I sought to spare before; God cried often to me to part with them, and I would not hear, and now God would not hear when I cried to be rid of them: "Thou wast a God that forgavest their iniquities, but thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." 8. The Lord by this did humble, and prove me, and let me see what was in my heart, even a great deal more wickedness than I suspected. 9. The Lord instructed me, that this is not my rest, and made me value heaven more than otherwise I would have done. 10. He discovered the riches and extent of that forgiveness that is with him, that it reaches to iniquity, transgression, and sin. That is, sins of all sorts, multiplied relapses not excepted. He that requires us to forgive to seventy times seven in a day, will not do less. Yea, he tells us, that in this respect his "thoughts are as far above ours, as the heavens are above the earth." And finally, the Lord hereby fitted me to compassionate others who are tempted, and comfort them. Thus I was made a gainer by my losses and falls, to the praise of his grace.

After some years struggling, the Lord made me lay aside all prejudices against proper means, and wait on him in the use of them all, with some eye to him, and then he gave me, in some measure, a victory: "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory."

CHAPTER V.

An Account of my exercise about the guilt of sin, the means of obtaining pardon, and the intimations thereof.

THE power of indwelling sin being still great, and, through its own activity, occasional temptations, more fixed advantages, and my own mistakes and negligence, frequently prevalent, I was cast into frequent perplexities about its guilt: "There was no soundness in my bones," no rest in my conscience, for sins that I had done.

Besides sins of infirmity, sometimes my corruptions did, through my sloth, neglect of proper means, and the advantages they otherwise had from temptations, and from their being rooted in my nature, bear me down, and carry me captive, prevail against me, and carry me, not only into the commission of grosser evils, at least in heart, and omission of duties, but even into frequently repeated relapses into these commissions and omissions; these being sins against light, engagements, obligations, intimations of love, the guilt of them was heavy upon my conscience, and I was much perplexed about them; my bones were broken, my conscience defiled exceedingly, and wounded for them.

At some times, when I fell into such sins, when self and pride prevailed, or the evils I was more deeply determined against obtained any notable advantage, I was, by "the deceitfulness of sin," for a time hardened and insensible, like David, after his foul fall. But then, 1. While it was so, grace languished, "the things that remained were ready to die." 2. The Lord hid himself; I had no countenance in duty; while this regard to sin continued, all was out of order.

At other times, I had no sooner complied, but my heart instantly smote me; and I was presently, with Peter after his fall, called and stirred up to the exercise of repentance, and inquiries after forgiveness. But sooner or later the Lord awakened me out of this security, and, sometimes by one mean, and sometimes by another, set my sins in order before mine eyes. 1. Sometimes he visited me with some outward affliction, and hid himself, and then I was put under a blessed necessity of seeking after him, and inquiring into the reason of his withdrawing, and laying his hand on me. When I was "bound in the cords of affliction," he showed to me my transgressions that I had committed. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." 2. He sometimes remarkably punished me, and wrote my sin upon my punishment: "Because, when I knew God, I glorified him not as God, neither was thankful; but became vain in my imagination;" therefore God, though he gave me not up (glory to his name!) "to vile affections," yet he let them loose to molest me. He, as it were, gave a commission to the king of Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon, some of my powerful neighbouring enemies, evils to which I had formerly been in bondage, with which I had been in friendship, on which, to my wounding, I had doted, and therefore now hated above all others, to some one or other, or it may be more, gave he a commission or permission to invade me: and then I began to consider what I had done, and open mine eyes when I was in the strait, and closely assaulted by them. 3. Sometimes again, and most frequently, by his word and Spirit in ordinances, he roused me, and laid, as it were, his finger on the sore, told me all that I had done, he sent a Nathan that told, "Thou art the man." Whoever gets away with sin, his own will not get leave to lie still, though they may lie long in it: "You only have I known, of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

When the Lord discovered sin to me, then was my soul troubled. 1. A sense of the wrath of God was let into my conscience, which at sometimes was very terrible. I had no rest, because his indignation went forth against me. The "poison of his arrows drunk up my spirits." 2. My soul was filled with shame, while a sense of innumerable evils, and especially such as imported ingratitude and wretched unkindness, lay heavy on my conscience,

I could not look up for blushing. I lay down in my shame, and my confusion covered me. 3. I was cast into dreadful fears, lest the Lord should "in anger shut up his tender mercies, and be gracious no more," and I should not get pardon, or at least a sense of it any more.

Satan, who waited for my halting, finding me in this case, frequently tempted me to give over duty. 1. He told me over all the marks of God's displeasure, and put the worst construction on every thing, as he did with Cain. 2. He hereon tempted me to draw this conclusion, that my sin was greater than that it could be forgiven, and that so there was "no succour in God" for me. And, 3. He told me, there was no more forgiveness; God's mercy was at an end; he had "forgotten to be gracious;" and attempted to prove it, by the unsuccessfulness of my endeavours; and thereon inferred, that it was to no purpose to "wait any longer."

But the Lord graciously broke the force of this temptation. 1. Sometimes by faint discoveries of forgiveness: "who can tell but he may be gracious." 2. By reminding me of former kindness, the "years of the right-hand of the Most High," and the discoveries of the sovereignty of his grace, at first when he manifested himself. 3. By letting me see the desperate result of this course, that ruin was inevitable in it; if I sat still, I saw I was gone; if I went into the city, and again followed the course of the world, I saw inevitable ruin there; and therefore I resolved to throw myself upon him, and if he saved me alive, I lived; and if otherwise, I should but die. 4. When this temptation was urged most violently, and I was hard put to it, then I thought it not time to dispute, whether ever the Lord had manifested himself savingly, but yielded the worst as to my case that the tempter could pretend, and then I laid my case, in all its aggravations, to the extensive promises of the covenant. Be it granted, said I, that I am but a hypocrite, that I never obtained pardon, that I am the chief of sinners, that my sins have such aggravations as those with which none other of mankind's sins are attended, "Yet the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and he came to save the chief of sinners." This way proved often relieving.

When I had got over these temptations, then I got up as I could, and resolved to seek him in the use of all the duties of his appointment, meditation, prayer, reading, hearing. These duties I followed with various success. For, 1. Sometimes when I endeavoured to confess my sins, the Lord closed my lips, and I had not a word to say. 2. Sometimes I went the round of duties; but with the spouse's success, "I sought him, but I found him not." 3. At other times I met with new strokes: "The watchmen that went about the city found me, and smote me, and took away my vail;" even the faithful servants of Christ made my wound deeper, by setting home sin more closely.

Sometimes, being outwearied, and sense wearing off through the weakness of our nature, diversions, and the deceitfulness of sin, I attempted to speak peace to myself, I got a sort of quietness and relief. But this was easily discernible. For, 1. It left me in my former deadness, and I was not as before, when God spake peace. 2. I was easily induced to "return again to folly." 3. When I said, "Peace, peace; sudden destruction followed it." For the Lord was wroth, and one way or other discovered his displeasure against me; and finally, my own peace did not heal the sore, for the wrath of God, shame, and confusion, hovered over my head.

When the Lord discovered to me my mistake, then he set to work again,

to inquire after him, and to pursue the former course; and when I had gone a "little further, I found him," and he relieved me, and the way by which he relieved me was the same with that by which he at first delivered me, whereof I have before given an account, and therefore I shall here state it only more briefly. 1. The Lord set my sin in all its aggravations, especially as it struck against him, before mine eyes: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and in thy sight done this ill." 2. The Lord led me up even to the fountain, and discovered original sin as the source, and all, at least many, of the other bitter waters that flowed from that bitter fountain, by the light of which he discovered this one, he (as it was with the woman of Samaria) "told me all that ever I did in my life." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." 3. Very often he laid before me, and brought me under an afflicting sense, even of "the iniquities of my fathers," and predecessors whom I never knew. 4. He cut off all excuses, and made me self-convicted, and so stopped my mouth quite, that I could neither deny nor excuse; and so I was guilty before God, being stript of all my ornaments. 5. He discovered to me what in justice he might do, and that he might cast me off, and out of his sight, like Cain; and brought me to own, that he would be righteous, holy, and clear in judging thus; and that any punishment on this side hell would be mercy. 6. In this case, I lay waiting to see what he would do with me, convinced that whatever he should do, though I could not but dread wrath and separation from him, and cry against it, yet I owned all would be just. "To the Lord belongs righteousness, and to me shame and confusion of face." 7. Then in mercy he interposed, and made a gracious discovery of the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness;" and that blood of atonement that cleanses the conscience from all sin, in the sight of the Lord. 8. By this he drew my soul to close with, and with trembling to rest on it; "Iniquities prevail against me, I must confess; but as for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away." 9. Having, by this look, drawn my eyes to look at him again, while I looked at him, my soul melted into tears, and my heart, that was formerly bound up, was loosed; and my lips, formerly sometimes quite closed, were opened. When I looked on him whom I had pierced, I mourned, and often, like Peter, I wept bitterly. Whereas before, when I was lying self-condemned, guilty, and my mouth stopped, I sometimes could scarce look up, or give a sigh or a groan, now I flowed in tears. 10. While he thus answered me, and I seemed slow of believing the news that were so good, and so unexpected, he created peace by the fruit of his lips; and, as it were, by the word, forced it upon my soul, and shed abroad his love in my heart. 11. On this I remembered all my former ways, which the Lord had formerly discovered to me; and was ashamed for them, and even confounded, now when the Lord was pacified. When he told me he would blot out and forget my sins, then I had the most distinct and affecting remembrance. Like Ephraim, when "I was turned, I repented; I smote upon my breast, I was ashamed, and even confounded; because I bore the reproach of my youth," and of my former ways. But this shame was not that dispiriting shame, accompanied with distrust, and inclining to hang down the hands; but an ingenuous concern and blushing for wretched unkindness, like that of the prodigal when his father met him. 12. By this my spirit was made tender, and I was put upon a resolution of walking mournfully before him, "in the bitterness of my soul." 13. Hereafter, while this discovery of forgiveness and peace by it continued, I

was made in some measure watchful of "returning again to folly. 14. I was quickened to duty: "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be turned unto thee." 15. While this lasted, and was not marred again by sin, the sins of others, and every provocation, by whomsoever done, I could mourn over. Rivers of tears were ready to run down mine eyes, because transgressors kept not God's law. 16. By this the conscience being purged, I now recovered that filial boldness of entering into the Lord's presence "by the blood of Jesus Christ;" yet with much tenderness and awe upon my soul. Finally, hereby my soul was much weaned from all things else, and endeared to the Lord. To this state the Lord frequently brought me. And now, alas! while I more rarely attain unto this exercise of repentance and faith, in such liveliness as then I often did, I am made many times to wish as to this repentance, that it were with me as in months past, though I dare not wish for the occasions of it again. At that time, when I was assaulted with boisterous lusts, and foiled by them, and my conscience defiled with guilt, the Lord did frequently lift me up; yea, lifted me sweetly up.

To prevent mistakes, I shall subjoin a few observations concerning this exercise. 1. Though at sometimes the Lord carried on this work gradually, even as to time; yet at other seasons, all this was done, as it were, at once and in a moment. The Lord, as he did to David, in one breathing spoke sin and peace. 2. There was a very great difference as to degrees in this work, sometimes convictions and humiliations were deeper, and discoveries of forgiveness clearer, and the exercise of faith and repentance more lively, and sometimes less so. But whenever God did thoroughly recover me from any grievous fall, all things in substance were found. 3. This was not always of a like continuance; sometimes, through my own fault, I quickly lost the jewel, and "provoked him at the Red Sea." 4. Though God, to punish me for my wickedness, sometimes let me seek peace long before I obtained it; yet at some seasons, to show the sovereignty of his grace, and that I might not pretend that it was my seeking that moved him to show mercy, he surprised me immediately upon the back of my sin, before ever I had thought in the least what I had done, and gave me such a look as made me weep bitterly. And when it was thus, it deeply affected my soul, and filled me with the most deep self-loathing and detestation, and the highest wonder at the riches, freedom, and astonishing sovereignty of grace. 5. There is one thing I may observe with grief of heart, that the most terrible enemies are not the most dangerous. At that time, I was attacked with sins that were easily known to be sins, my conscience was easily convinced of them, and alarmed with them, and thereby was more deeply exercised, and sought more after distinct discoveries of forgiveness, which were attended with all these pleasant effects; since that, the Lord in some measure broke these lusts, I have been assaulted with less discernible evils, sins under the mask of duties; and these secretly destroy my strength and rarely and with difficulty are they discovered in their exceeding sinfulness; and so, when it is much needed, I am more a stranger to the state of repentance. But as I see I need it, so the Lord knows I long to be brought into it, and to be humbled, especially for secret and hidden sins that wasted the strength. Often have I been made to think of this, that all the excuses mentioned in the parable of the supper, that kept them that were invited from closing with the offer, were taken from occasions in themselves lawful. And no doubt, the excuses by which the Lord's own people are kept

from that nearness that it is their duty and interest to seek after, flow from the same things ; I have found them far the more dangerous and hurtful hindrances.

The Lord by such exercises instructed me since, and even at the time, in several useful lessons. 1. The Lord in this way taught me how to walk with him. He dealt with me as we are wont to do with children, he held me by the hand, he let me well nigh slip and sometimes fall, and this to let me know I was not able to go alone ; and then he graciously raised me up, and comforted me, that I should not by this be altogether discouraged from walking in his way, " I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms ; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love ; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." 2. As the Lord, by the prevalence of sin, taught the necessity of an extensive remedy, so, by the experience of forgiveness in such cases as I have mentioned, he taught me the certainty of this, that this forgiveness is really as extensive, rich, and free as the case requires. 3. He, by the experience of this, enabled me to understand better, and speak more feelingly of these truths than otherwise I could have done, and to comfort others with comforts, not only real but experienced, even such with which I had been comforted of God ; thus what I have heard, and seen, and handled of the word of life, that declared I to others. 4. The Lord gave me some acquaintance with the nature, exercise, and effects of the most useful and necessary graces of his Spirit, faith, repentance, &c. And finally, the Lord beat down self very much by this exercise. Of this design the Lord of late, while I read in my family, in the 9th chapter of Deuteronomy, gave me a pleasant view, which I shall represent in the following remarks from that chapter.

1. God's great design upon Israel, is to manifest the glory of his grace, mercy, patience, faithfulness in their salvation, their deliverance from Egypt, and putting them in possession of Canaan. See verses 5, 6.

2. Naturally sinners, as all his people are such, are, and appear very opposite to this design, being deeply selfish, as this chapter and the whole of the Scriptures manifest. And this self has two branches, which are like its two eyes, self-strength and self-righteousness, ver. 1, 2, 5, 6.

3. Self, in these two branches, is very strong. We are ready to pretend, that our own strength carried us through these difficulties, when once we have overcome them, which we were so far from being able of ourselves to grapple with, that the very thoughts of them frightened us ; compare ver. 1, 2, of this chapter with the 13th and 14th chapters of Numbers. And we are ready to ascribe to our own righteousness what we get, when we meanwhile are not worthy of the least of all God's mercies, ver. 5, 6, &c.

4. Yet how strong soever these are, they must be subdued. In order to this, the Lord, after he begins to manifest himself to his people, leads them not presently into Canaan, but carries them through the wilderness, where a variety of temptations draw out discoveries of their secret corruptions, their weakness, and wickedness, ver. 6, 7.

5. The discoveries of God's patience, mercy, and grace, and of his people's weakness and wickedness, especially after remarkable manifestations of the Lord, are means of which the Lord makes use, and remarkably blesses, to cure them of these distempers, and to put out these two eyes of the wicked idol. Consider the whole chapter.

6. The Lord, for this end, whenever he is about to complete or carry on the begun deliverance and mercy, revives the impression of these things. Read the whole chapter, particularly ver. 7.

Many other gracious designs did the Lord in this way carry on ; he let me see the bitterness of sin, and discovered it to be exceeding sinful ; he let me see much of the hellish ingratitude of my heart ; he let me see the necessity of coming daily to the throne of grace, for grace to help in time of need, and for mercy and forgiveness. He made me see with wonder, how one view of forgiveness and pardoning mercy alienates the soul more from sin, than twenty sights, nay, tastes of hell, which Pelagians cannot understand, and many other things.

Besides these more gross evils I fell into, through the violence of temptation, I was exercised about the guilt of sins of daily incursion and infirmity, deadness, wandering in duty, and innumerable others. When I began to be first exercised about forgiveness, I was much difficulted about these ; and I shall, in the following particulars, state my exercise about them. 1. When the Lord manifested himself, his enemies fled before him, and received a stunning stroke, as has been showed. 2. It was some time before any of the stronger enemies discovered themselves again ; presumptuous sins, as has been represented, for a time kept quiet. The first discoveries of the remaining power of indwelling sin which I obtained was in the invasion of sin of daily infirmity : “ For in many things we offend all.” 3. On this I began to be much discouraged, neither understanding well our state here, that if any man say, he has no sin, he deceives himself ; and the gracious provision made for this case in the covenant of grace, the daily sacrifice, that is the daily application to the throne of grace, the blood of atonement, the fountain opened ; and so being under a fond and groundless expectation of entire freedom from sin. 4. My foolish expectation being quickly disappointed by the outbreaking of these sins, I wist not what to do : I thought it hard to trouble him who had been so kind, to seek new favours. The pride of my heart could not stoop to be continually, daily, hourly, indebted for new favours : I would have been a lord, and come no more to Christ. This pride was so masked up, that at that time I did not discern it, but since the Lord has made it manifest. 5. But necessity has no law, they grew many : “ For who can understand his errors ?” and the light of the Lord daily discovered more and more of them. 6. On this I endeavoured to humble myself distinctly for every one of them, and to make a distinct application to the throne of grace about each ; but when I began to observe them, they were so many, that if I had followed this course, my whole time would not have sufficed. Hereon the Lord led me to that course, which a worthy friend, to whom I owe much for a distinct understanding of the Lord’s work with me, told me what Franciscus Desales, a Popish casuist, advises to in this case : I was fain to take them all in the lump, or rather to go with them all on me at once, and plunge myself in the fountain that is opened for uncleanness ; that is, I took a view of myself as defiled by innumerable evils of this sort, and under a sense of them, cast myself upon the glorious atonement, and endeavoured to lay stress for cleansing as to them all, whether such as I discerned distinctly, or such as I had not yet discovered, on that blood that “ cleanseth from all sin ;” which I think was the Psalmist’s way under the like case : “ Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have dominion over me : then

shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." That Popish casuist before-mentioned, as my worthy friend told me, illustrates this by a very elegant similitude. "If a man see one or two filthy creatures on him, he shakes or washes them off: but if he look and see himself all overspread with such, then he must bethink himself of some general course; he goes to some bridge, and leaps into a deep pool, and drowns them all, and leaves them behind him." If any one grosser sin overtake us, we must endeavour a distinct recovery and intimation of pardon, by a distinct application to the blood of sprinkling; but when we look upon these sins which cannot be numbered and searched out, and which are still growing, then we must betake ourselves with the man to the bridge, and leap into the pool. 7. To make this matter yet plainer, I observe, that the light wherein that plenteous redemption that is with God, was first discovered, though variously clouded and darkened, yet continued in some measure: a child of light continues light in the Lord; he may walk in darkness, and to his sense have no light, while yet it is the remainder of light that makes him discern his darkness; but he really is not darkness as before: he has summer's sun that shines longer, brighter, and warmer; and his winter's sun, that shines shorter, is more frequently clouded, and has less heat; he has his fair days, and foul and rainy days, and a changeable intercourse of day and night, wherein he has only the moon and stars; but there is still light more or less. 8. When no extraordinary indisposition, no extraordinary darkness was on me, this habitual discovery of forgiveness, and the way to it, had its own use. The winter's sun was not able to revive me when I was cast into any of those distempers above-mentioned: and therefore, as has been above narrated in that case, I waited a glimpse of the sun in its strength; but, generally by the direction of that light, I endeavoured daily, as to sins of infirmity, to betake myself in prayer to the blood of atonement, according as the Lord has taught us by the daily morning and evening sacrifice under the law: as for particular cases and pollutions, there were other institutions with respect to them. 9. This application by prayer to "the redemption that is in Christ, even the forgiveness of sin through faith in his blood," according to this discovery of it, in and by prayer, especially when the Lord quickened by any new glimpse; for the winter sun has his warm and refreshing beams, even in the coldest season. This application, I say, especially when the Lord, as he frequently did, gave any new breathing, did relieve me, and help to quiet my conscience as to the afflicting sense of these sins of daily incursion: when the Lord helped me to pray for cleansing from secret sins, and keep "back from presumptuous sins," I was satisfied as to my uprightness and freedom from the great transgression, and acceptance with him, in following any duty of my station, through the Beloved. 10. As the case was not so urgent, so neither was the relief so discernible; but it was sufficient to answer in some measure the end above-mentioned, freedom from dispiriting discouragement, and some measure of comfort and quiet as to my acceptance with God through Christ.

I conclude with four observations as to the whole. 1. Though we may sometimes heal our own wound slightly, yet it is God's prerogative to speak solid peace; yea, and the speaking of it is a work of the greatest power, where the conscience is really exercised: it is a creating peace; and where he creates it, he can make it take effect: "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold

him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." 2. The Lord let me see, that considering the pride and unbelief of our hearts, and the greatness of our guilt, it is not easy to obtain a belief that the forgiveness that is with God is able to answer all we need, and so to engage a sinner to betake himself to it at all times, when once he comes to see his state thoroughly; and when this unbelief is in some measure mastered, and the soul satisfied of the fulness of the fountain, and the extensive, nay infinite reach of the forgiveness that is with God, and the pride of heart so far broken, that the soul is willing to be daily indebted to grace and mercy; it is not easy to keep up either a due detestation of sin, or keep our carnal hearts from a common use of it, or rather an abuse of it. Here, in my opinion, lies one of the greatest secrets of practical godliness, and the highest attainment in close walking with God; to come daily and wash, and yet to keep as great a value for this discovery of forgiveness, as if it were once only to be obtained, and no more. Indeed, the more we see of it, the more we should value it; but our carnal hearts, on the contrary, turn formal, and count it a common thing. That which is our daily allowance we value little, and we are fond of novelties and dainties. Bread is more precious than most, nay any of the rarities which men purchase at so dear a rate; but because God has provided it in plenty, and we daily use it, therefore we make a light account of it. Blessed are they with whom it is otherwise in the case now in hand. 3. I observe that the joy of the Lord is then only to be retained when we walk tenderly and circumspectly; it is inconsistent, not only with the entertainment of any gross sin, but with a careless walk: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." 4. I observe, then, when I was at the lowest ebb as to forgiveness, doubting if the Lord would pardon, after many duties have been attempted, without finding the Lord, or any sense of his love, I have often found him in the duty of thankfulness. And although one will say, What had I then to be thankful for? I answer, I began thus: What a mercy is it that I am out of hell! "It is of the Lord's mercies I am not consumed;" blessed be the Lord for this. Again, What a mercy it is, that not only the Lord has helped me to notice his mercy in keeping me out of hell, but to be thankful for it. Again, Blessed be the Lord, that has kept me out of hell; blessed be the Lord, that has made me observe it with thankfulness; and blessed be the Lord, that has made me observe his mercy in helping me to thankfulness. Thus I have gone on till the Lord has led me to a sense of his love, and restored comfort to my soul. They that will praise the Lord for little, shall have more: "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."

Upon a further observation of this variety of cases, with which I was exercised, the Lord's management of them, and what I have felt in myself, I see, besides the fruits before-mentioned, many others. 1. The Lord hereby rebuked me for my fondness of enlargement, and my thinking to live a life of sense, and trained me somewhat up to a life of faith, the faith of adherence, that cleaves to God, as revealed in the word, and refuses to quit the word, even when it finds not the Lord in it in a sensible way that refreshes, which certainly is more strong than that which cleaves to it, when it feels sensible refreshment and power to trust in God, when hidden and threatening to slay; it is to hope against hope. 2. He taught me not to

judge of my state by my frames : besides many other lessons that now I recollect not.

CHAPTER VI.

My Exercises about the being of God, and showing the way of my relief from this temptation.

I HAVE before mentioned, and given some account of my trials about the being of God. Being now to give an account of the relief, it will be proper to recapitulate briefly my whole exercise with respect to this, and set the temptation and the relief together.

I have showed above, that I was early, even as soon almost as I began to have any close concern about religion, exercised with temptations in reference to this great and fundamental truth. But at first I had no arguments urged against this truth, or injected into my mind. Only being made to see, that this was the hinge on which the whole of religion turns, all hopes depend, and by which all practices were to be regulated, I found myself at a loss for want of an evidence sufficiently clear, and strong, and convincing, which I thought necessary, with respect to a truth on which so much weight was to be laid. In a word, I was at Pharaoh's pass : "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him, and let Israel go?" Plainly, very great things are demanded of me, and I am called to hope for great things ; and before I trust so far, I would be satisfied to know more of that God in whom I am to trust as to such great things.

But afterwards Satan attacked me by subtile suggestions, as I have showed before, took me at a disadvantage, when I was estranged from God, and my mind intent upon abstract subtilties : and while I followed such vain speculations, intruding into things I had not seen, he took his opportunity, and said daily, "Where is thy God?" And when he had got me down, he triumphed, Where is now that mouth, with which thou didst all along reproach Atheists? Such are their arguments ; try your strength with them, and fight them.

On this, a sharp conflict began in my breast. On the one hand, Satan, in conjunction with the natural atheism of my heart, plied me hard with "fiery darts," and subtile sophistry, arguments sometimes astonishing, so far were they above my reach. On the other hand, I, a poor apostate creature, sadly darkened, but yet retaining some remainders of light, which God has made manifest in my conscience, as in those of other men, and somewhat confirmed in those notions of God by education, the outward dispensation of the word, and, it may be, by some common work of the Spirit, rivetting all the former, keeping alive these impressions, or at least restraining Satan and my corruptions from blotting them out. Against that formidable confederacy, I, such a one as I have now represented myself, made head, and appeared.

In this conflict, I used various means : 1. I sometimes rejected the suggestions, and refused them a hearing : "Who art thou that repliest (or disputest) against God?" It shocks nature's light to say, "There is no God." Even the fool dare scarce say it out. 2. Sometimes I prevented them, as it were, and not only refused a hearing, but representing in my

own soul how deep resentment such a provocation, such a motion deserved. If any man will plead against God, or for Baal, none shall entreat for him, but he should early be put to death, Judges vi. 31. 3. When the impudent enemy would not thus be put off, I endeavoured to maintain the truth, and answer his arguments. But his instances were so many, and so subtle, that I could not prevail this way; the longer I stood arguing the case, I was put to the greater loss. When he comes on speaking terms, he is too hard for us; and no wonder he is so for us, for he worsted our first parents in innocence. 4. When I found this, then I often would wish for a discovery of God himself. O that he would appear, and "O that I knew where I might find him!" when my wishes took no effect. 5. The devil on this took advantage to tell me, that he did not appear; and that surely if there was a God, he would help one that was standing up for him in such a strait. In this case, I sometimes hoped that he would arise, and then mine enemies would be made to flee before him; though the truth is, I could give but little reason for it. 6. Sometimes I prayed. Satan urged me with the unreasonableness of praying till I was once sure there was a God: and, I confess, I was sometimes hardly put to it, to defend the practice; yet I always inclined to the affirmative, and thought, that if there was a God, as I durst not say but I had reason to think there was, he could best satisfy me as to his own being. 7. I was sometimes obliged to flee him, and seek sanctuary in diversions. 8. Sometimes the Lord mercifully restrained him, and he left me for a season.

While this trial was lengthened out, the Lord frequently gave some check to it and to Satan: 1. By clear discoveries of the horrible tendency of the temptations, that they tended to destroy the foundation of all human happiness; cast reproach upon all the best and wisest in the world, and account and set up proud fools as the only happy and wise men. "If the foundations are destroyed, what hath the righteous done?" Then are the proud happy, and they that hate God are exalted. 2. I was relieved by the consideration of the comfortable issue others had gotten, who had been in like manner exercised: "Our fathers trusted in God; they trusted in God, and were helped." 3. God sometimes let me see some glimpses of his glory, even in the works of creation: "The heavens declare his glory." 4. The Lord, sometimes, from the word, relieved me by some beams of his glory. And I remember I was oftener than once helped by the Lord's suggesting, with unusual power, the three children's answer to the king of Babylon, with the glorious issue: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." There was something indeed here that I could not reach: but my heart was affected with the noble resolution, and encouraged to attempt, weakly as I could, to write after their copy; and the result was encouraging. 5. The devil, in these temptations, acted so visible a part, that I could not but discern that there was a devil; and when I saw him so deeply engaged in this quarrel, I was strongly induced to think he was not come out against a straw, or to hunt a shadow. 6. When the Lord began to deal with me closely about sin, the edge of this temptation was much blunted. Satan could not easily prevail in persuading me there was no God, while I found

his "arrows stick hard in me, and the poison of them drinking up my spirits."

But yet I was not fully relieved. Nothing but a discovery of God could give a full defeat to Satan. Wherefore the Lord at length pitied me; not in the way that I could have desired; for I would have had it then. But considering I was then an unhumbled enemy, God could not have appeared otherwise than an enemy, and I could not have thus seen him and lived. Such an appearance would indeed have made me "believe and tremble." But this would have cast me into new trouble. Wherefore the Lord led me to proper satisfaction another way: he discovered sin in the way above-mentioned; and by this discovery, as I have now hinted, diverted the violence of this temptation, and broke its force, as has been above hinted: for "he stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind." And having thus humbled me, he gave me the above-mentioned discovery of himself in his glory in Christ Jesus.

That then which brought me to soul-satisfying assent, and repelled all temptations against the being of a God, was the above-mentioned view of him in his glory. While "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," by his word and Spirit "shining into my mind, to give me the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," I could not desiderate any more satisfying evidence of his being. And while that light did shine, or when at any time it does shine, Satan then dares not oppose. All the mountains of opposition, the bulky arguments, that appear like rocks and hills, shook at the presence of the Lord, and were carried into the midst of the sea. And now the light being come, and the Lord being seen in his own light, I had manifold and satisfying evidences of this glorious truth.

1. I had the evidence of sight, not by the eye of the body, but by that of faith; I saw the glory of God as represented in the word, shining with the clearest lustre, that satisfied me it was truth, and no lie. The glory was so great, that it not only let me see, and convinced me of its reality, but really convinced me, in some measure, that nothing else is real. This sight gave me more consistent and becoming notions of God, his nature and attributes, than ever I attained before; which shook the foundation of many of my former scruples that proceeded only from my ignorance and darkness about the nature of God.

2. I had the evidence of the ear; for I heard him speak, not to my bodily ears, but to my soul; and his voice sufficiently distinguished itself from the voice of any creature. For, 1. He spoke terror to me from Sinai; and then, when my soul was as the troubled sea, he said, "Peace, be still;" and with authority commanded he "the winds and the sea," and they obeyed, and presently there was a calm. His word enlightened mine eyes, and converted my soul. "It was a powerful voice that came from the Lord most high. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

3. I had likewise a feeling of his power. I not only heard his voice, but I felt his power, "casting me down," and raising me up again, and saying to one that was weak, "Be strong;" yea, and commanding strength. Thus my faith stood not "in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."

I have before told what of his power I felt, what effects were wrought, and so here I forbear any further account.

4. I was now made to “taste and see that the Lord is good, and that the soul that trusts in him is blessed.” “I sat down under his shadow, and the fruits above-mentioned were sweet to my taste.”

5. I was made to feel the savour, and relish a fragrant sweetness in his word, works, and ways. His name was “as ointment poured forth,” and therefore I loved him.

6. By this all my objections were solved,—“Faith is the evidence of things not seen;” it not only satisfies the soul about them by the clearest evidence, but it reproves contrary objections: “At the brightness that was before him, the dark clouds passed away.” My objections were now like those kings mentioned by the Psalmist, who had come in combination to ruin the church, but were frightened by God’s appearing: “Lo, the kings were assembled, they passed together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.” Just so it was with my adversaries: faith (as the word rendered evidence, Heb. xi. 1. signifies,) reproved them, and at this rebuke they fled. For, 1. If they should now say, “Where is thy God?” I was ready to reply, “Lo, this God is our God, we have waited for him and he will save us; we have waited for him, and will be glad in his salvation.” 2. If they should now object to the seeming inconsistency of his attributes, which was often made use of to trouble me, I had an answer given, a word put into my mouth. At the same time God condescended to show me his back-parts; he satisfied me, that no man could behold his face. He, by the discovery, gave me a view of his incomprehensibility, sufficient to silence all these: “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” Our short line cannot measure God. 3. When the seeming confusion and disorders in his government were urged, I now had an answer to all these: “He gives an account of none of his matters.” “His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters: his footsteps are not known.” Yet, though “clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 4. The Lord really cleared many particular objections as to all these heads; and by this discovery of himself in the sanctuary, he satisfied me in a rational way, yet above reason, letting me see rational answers in the light of his word and Spirit. He laughs at the prosperity of the wicked, because he sees their day coming. Thus were mine enemies foiled; and, “so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.”

This light, thus kindled, he daily increased, and confirmed me every day more and more by new discoveries of himself from the word. And now I could look with satisfaction upon the heavens and the earth, and see the print of his hand upon them.

CHAPTER VII.

An Account how I came to be satisfied that the Scriptures are the word of God, and how temptations, in reference to them, were repelled.

TO GIVE a clear account of the issue of my temptation, it will be necessary that I shortly recapitulate what formerly has been spoken concerning the trial, and my behaviour under it.

This temptation did not attack me so early as the former, but it was managed much in the same way ; sometimes my mind only hung in suspense, and hovered in uncertainty for want of evidence proportioned to the importance of the truth for my faith to fix on. At other times, I was strangely harassed with violent temptations, multiplied and subtle objections, which thronged daily in on my mind, by reading books full of them, by conversing with enemies to the word, by Satan's suggestions, which were by much the most subtle and troublesome to me.

This exercise was in some measure more perplexing than the former, because it was no less ruining to all satisfaction in religion ; the objections were much more plausible, they were far more in number, and entertained by persons of a better character, and the evidence of the truth lay farther from the comprehension of an unenlightened mind.

Before the trial came, the Lord gave, by considerations formerly mentioned, sometimes a merciful check to my temptations, and kept them from quite overwhelming me ; of which I have formerly given some account.

I tried many ways besides prayer and attendance upon ordinances ; I bought, borrowed, and read many books written in defence of them, which wanted not its own solid use ; for hereby I obtained a deep rational conviction of the truth, and so was emboldened to plead for it against my enemies, and oft-times to beat them at their own weapons ; and I got many particular objections fully answered, and was thereby encouraged to wait for full satisfaction, without despairing : especially one book had this use. After I had, without the satisfaction I desired, though not without the fruits above-mentioned, perused many later writings, the Lord led me to look into the Fulfilling of the Scriptures, which had been lying by me neglected ; and I found this more convincing than any I had read ; because it brought me nearer the proper evidence on which faith should fix than any of the rest : it discovered more of the intrinsic worth of the word than the other, and pleaded strongly in point of reason.

Yet, after all this, my mind remained unsatisfied ; none of these arguments had authority to repel temptation, being but the wisdom of men ; nor, on the same account, did they lay a foundation for divine faith ; nor did they enlighten a darkened mind to see the evidence of God in the word ; nor were they able to rectify an indisposed palate, and convey a taste and savour of the word of God to the soul, that was able to satisfy me that it was such bread as a man might live by.

Thus it continued with me until the Lord came, and made the fore-mentioned discovery of his glory to my soul ; and thereby I was relieved and satisfied as to this doubt also. The Lord had before, when I was under the convincing work of his Spirit, affected my conscience with some sense of his authority in the word, evidencing itself by that convincing and condemning light and power which I discerned and felt ; and thereby the force of the foregoing temptation was usually broken in some measure, when the Lord, by the word, fastened on my soul a sense of my guilt ; but this discovery of sin by the word being terrible to me, rather extorted an assent than induced to a willing consent and cheerful acquiescence in the word as coming from God. But the Lord, when he gave the before-mentioned relief by the word, conveying a sense of his authority in it, by a light and power that relieved my soul, repelled temptations, revived, composed, comforted, and strongly bore up a soul before depressed and bowed down. This made me not only give an assent, but with pleasure acquiesce in this

word as the word of life ; then I found his words, and did eat them, and I rejoiced as they that find great treasure, and they were “to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” And by this I was sweetly satisfied as to the Scriptures being his word : for they did many ways evince that they were from him.

1. All discoveries of guilt were conveyed by them, before and since my relief. God by it revealed to me sins which none save God, that searches the heart, could know ; it made those sins manifest which I knew not that any creature else knew ; by it the secrets of my heart were made manifest ; and therefore I could not but fall down, and own that God was in it of a truth ; and that indeed it was a beam from the Fountain of Light, “For whatever maketh manifest is light ;” and that it was from him who tries the reins, and sets our secret sins in the light of his countenance. It discerned the thoughts and intents of my heart, in such a quick and powerful way, and with that authority, that made me own it the word of God. And now I was ready to say, Come, see a book that has told me all that ever I did in my life,—is not this the book of God ?

2. All the discoveries that the Lord gave of his wrath were conveyed by the Scriptures ; it was by them that his wrath was manifested to my soul, and revealed from heaven against me. The word, as the arrow of the Almighty, thrown by an omnipotent arm, pierced and stuck in my soul ; and the poison of it drunk up my spirit ; it was the rod of God’s strength, by which he broke and crushed me while his enemy.

3. It was by the same word that he revealed to my soul that glorious discovery of his being, attributes, purposes, and his whole will in reference to my salvation by Jesus Christ, which I noticed before ; by this he conveyed to my soul sweet and satisfying evidences as to his being ; satisfying, consistent, and someway God-becoming notions of his nature. Herein it was that he proclaimed his name, “The Lord God, merciful and gracious” unto sinners in Christ, as I have before showed.

4. It was by the word he conveyed all those converting, transforming, quickening, supporting, reviving, composing influences above-mentioned. It was his word converted my soul while I lay in sin ; quickened me when I was dead, changed me into his image in some measure ; revived me, and watered me ; when again I was weary, supported and stayed me when I was ready to faint ; and composed me when I was like the troubled sea.

5. It was by the same word that he let in glorious discoveries of all the truths of religion wherewith I was now made acquainted ; let me see the wonders of his law, “excellent things in counsel and knowledge.” By it he was pleased to discover the craft, the power, the actings, and designs of my enemies ; and by it he satisfied me of my doubts, let me see his secret designs in my trials, and somewhat of his designs in many of his public administrations, against which I had before taken exception.

6. As all these discoveries and influences were conveyed by the word, so he now, in the conveyance, affected my conscience with his authority, and evidenced that his name was in it, by that light and power peculiar to God, that went along with it. It spake not in all these things as the Scribes and Pharisees, the wisest, the greatest, or the best of men, but with another sort of authority and weight, it spake as “never man spake.” Whatever it said, either with respect to God, or my case, or others’, my conscience was made to submit to it ; when he convinced by his word of things which I knew not to be faults, and men notice not, conscience obeyed, and took

the hint ; and, armed with this authority, accused, arraigned, condemned, and, as it were, executed the sentence too. Nor would it take shelter, or regard defences or pleas from any other quarter. When God spake wrath, he kindled a flame in my soul by the breath of this word, that many waters could not quench : he raised a storm in it, that I could neither quiet, nor work against, so as to get to land. The heart that before was as unconcerned as a stone at reading the word, or hearing it, now trembled and quaked. In like manner, when he spoke peace, he created it. He made the deaf to hear, and the hearer to live. He sent his word and healed me ; and immediately there was a calm. “The winds and seas obeyed him ;” at his rebuke they fled. Temptations, after it, spoke not again. When I was self-destroyed, self-condemned, and, by its power, driven from all pleas, so that I durst neither deny, excuse, nor extenuate, nor quarrel the hardest sentence which I dreaded most, and was thereby cast into the greatest agony of trouble, when I was ready to say with Job, “If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice.” When, with him, I refused to be comforted, and scarcely thought comfort possible ; yet, whenever he sent his word, it healed me, and my soul was commanded to be at peace, a glorious calm always ensued. Whereas, on the other hand, when I or others endeavoured to speak peace to myself, mine enemies boldly repelled all, and fell on me, as the devil did on the exorcists.

7. The Lord now sweetly relieved me as to my doubts about the Scriptures. 1. Whereas mine enemies had often pressed me with this, that there were many pretenders to revelation, and in order to perplex me, asked how I would or could distinguish the word of God from these pretenders ; the Lord himself now gave a quieting reply : “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream : and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord ? Is not my word like as a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?” 2. He was pleased particularly to speak these things to my soul, at which I had stumbled, and often to evidence his authority in and by those passages at which I took exception. And this condescension was of manifold use : it satisfied me as to those passages ; it reproved and humbled me for my unbelief and ignorance in quarrelling at them ; it rendered me jealous of the like temptations with respect to other passages. It put me to plead for light as to what was dark from the Lord ; it gave me hope as to the issue : “These things understood not his disciples at the first. They said, therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while ? We cannot tell what he saith.—But when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them : and they believed the Scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said.” Then I was made to say, with the disciples, “Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.” 3. Where I was not presently satisfied, the Lord gave me subsistence, as it were something to live on till light came ; he satisfied me, from the word, of the reasons of his expressing himself in the Scriptures in parables to the multitude ; and he told me, that what he did and said, I knew not now ; but encouraged me to hope that I should know hereafter, when my need required it. 4. He was as good as his word ; for when I was alone with him, he opened what before was spoken in parables ; and while he opened the Scriptures, and discovered my ignorance he often made my “heart burn within.” 5. He satisfied me as to many things that I was not yet

“able to bear them;” as to others, that it was not for me to know them at present; that the proper season of light as to them would come, when he would show me plainly of them; and then should I know them. 6. He discovered to me his wisdom and goodness in training me up to dependence, for the opening of “my eyes to see the wonders of his law;” and leading me to importune him, that what I knew not he might teach; and discovering thereby, that I knew but in part, and stood in need of the Spirit, to “guide into all truth,” to bring all things to remembrance; and that it was my duty to “meditate on God’s law day and night;” and search the Scriptures, and that with much humility, since “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he shows them his covenant;” and he guides “the meek in judgment,” and clearly teaches them his way.

8. When after this I read the Scriptures, and found not that powerful light shining with that warming, quickening, and sparkling glory; yet I found mine eyes opened, and a habitual light planted in my soul, by which I was enabled almost every where to discern the glory of the Lord in some measure; and thereby my conscience was secretly overawed, and brought even then to regard them as his word; being translated out of darkness into light, and illuminated in some measure in the knowledge of God, his nature, purposes, and the tendency of his whole dealings with men; there was thereby a light reflected on the whole Scripture; and I was generally enabled to discern the congruity of all that I read there to those discoveries of God, and how worthy of him, and like himself every thing was. And by this abiding light, I was capable of discerning, in the word, discoveries of the actings of sin in grace, a penetration and exactness beyond the reach of any, save the omniscient and only-wise God.

And being thus once in this way quieted as to the truth, in the same and other ways of a like nature, I was daily confirmed.

CHAPTER VIII.

A short account of the issue of some other temptations with which I had been exercised, and the relief I obtained, with respect to them, from the Lord.

I HAVE formerly showed, that Satan, who had often tempted me to pride, when he found it for his interest, turned himself another way, and made it his work to drive me to a bastard sort of humility. When I was caught in the thicket of his temptations about the truth of the Scriptures, and other things of a like nature, and was using means to get my mind relieved, he often, with much importunity, urged me with this thought, “To what purpose do you seek for satisfaction, or how can you be so vain as to expect it about those things, wherein men of incomparably greater reach, abilities, diligence, and opportunities, have been obliged to remain unsatisfied, and upon that account have given up with them?” This temptation was often urged with that hellish violence, that I had no spirit left in me by it: I was ready to let my hands hang down, my knees turned feeble, and my mouth was often at speaking it out, that there was no hope; and I went about to make myself despair of any good fruit of any labour I had taken, or that could by me be exercised, and laid out, under the sun.

When the Lord made the foregoing discovery of himself to me, the force of this temptation was quite broken by seeing the truths of God in his own light. But I did not get a particular discovery of the weakness of this temptation then, till sometime after, reading in my usual course the first three chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Lord was pleased to open mine eyes, and make me understand the weakness of this temptation. The light that then shined upon my soul, from and by this portion of Scripture, and the satisfaction of soul it gave me as to this temptation, no words can express: nor can I at this distance of time narrate all that then the Lord made convincingly clear to me from his word. Yet the substance I do remember, and shall represent in the following remarks:

1. God here represented to me, that his great design in the method of salvation, made choice of by infinite Wisdom, was to stain the pride of all human glory: that "no flesh might glory in his sight; but that he that glories, should glory only in the Lord."

2. The Lord discovered, that a vain ambition to be wise above what God allowed, was the spring and principal part of our apostacy from God; and that ever since Satan first dropped that poison into our natures, it has wrought strongly: "Vain man would be wise. The Jews ask a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."

3. That in order to the attainment of the foregoing design, and indeed for the recovery of man, it was plainly necessary, that man's ambition in this matter should be effectually destroyed. This being a principal tendency of our nature, if it were not cured, we were not completely recovered. This lying in a plain opposition to the design of God, if it were not levelled, his design could not be reached. For this purpose it became necessary, that God should "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent."

4. God to vindicate his own wisdom, which was reproached by this vain ambition of man, to fix an eternal blot on this wisdom of man, set up in opposition to it, and effectually to discover its vanity, in the depth of his wisdom, and holy severity in punishing this ambition, and other wickednesses of vain man, suffered, for many ages, "all nations to walk in their own ways," and tried them, whether they were better than God's ways: whether they could supply the defects with which they fondly imagined God at first had made them, or relieve themselves from the misery their apostacy had brought them under. "He said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." And the event was every way answerable to the expectation and design of divine wisdom and justice, and the desert of the wickedness and folly of men, who made the attempt; for, after near four thousand years spent in fruitless endeavours, through the wise forbearance of God, "the world by wisdom knew not God." They, in the wisdom of God, quite missed the mark; "their foolish minds were darkened, seeking to be wise, they became fools;" and, instead of getting their eyes opened to see and know more than God allowed them, they could see nothing but their own nakedness; and so imperfect were their discoveries, that their wisdom suggested to them that fig-leaves would cover that.

5. After, in the wisdom of God, "the world by wisdom knew not God;" after they had spent the time allotted them for the trial and discovery of the vanity of their own wisdom with a success answerable to the vanity of

the attempt ; God, in the depth of his compassion, interposed for the relief of mankind ; and for the promotion of the glorious design above-mentioned, was pleased to pitch on a way quite opposite to all that the wisdom of foolish man aimed at. The means he made use of were not such as man's wisdom would, or could expect, prescribe, or approve of. He made not choice of the "enticing words of man's wisdom," or eloquence, human eloquence. It was no way suitable to the majesty, truth, and sincerity of God, to make choice of that mean art, by which the affections of weak men are inveigled, and their judgments biassed, and led blindfold in a subjection to those passions which they should govern. He made no choice of artificial reasonings, the other eye of human wisdom. It did not become the majesty of God to dispute men into their duty, or a compliance with his will. And although he wrought signs to awaken the attention of a world drowned in security, to conciliate respect to his ambassadors, to strengthen the faith of his own, and cut off all seemingly rational pleas for unbelief ; yet he chose not them, nor did he principally insist on them, as the means of converting and recovering the world, not being willing to derogate so far from his word, as to encourage an opinion, that the devil would, and has forwardly propagated, that God's word is not upon its own evidence, without miracles, worthy of the acceptation of rational creatures. Nor would he gratify the unbelieving curiosity of men, who would put God to the necessity of altering the course of nature, and please their humour on every turn.

6. God having rejected all these, made choice of the foolishness of preaching ; that is, a plain declaration of his mind and will, in his name, in the "demonstration of the Spirit and power, and not in the enticing words of man's wisdom," by persons commissioned for that purpose by him. After that, in "the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." Now, this was every way worthy of God. Man was injurious to God, by crediting the devil rather than God. The devil seemed to have gained a considerable advantage, in persuading man in his integrity to credit him, and discredit God. God, on the other hand, brought shame on him, by engaging fallen man to reject the devil and credit him on his bare word ; and upon this, to give up with Satan, and all that adhered to him.

7. God yet further to manifest his design, as he made use of the foolishness of preaching, that mean which, though really it is "the wisdom and power of God," yet men look on as foolish and weak ; so he made choice, not of the Scribes, the learned, wise disputers, to be his ambassadors, but of foolish, weak, illiterate men, that by things which in appearance "are not, he might bring to nought those that are."

8. In a further consistency with this design, God saw meet to disappoint men's expectation and wisdom, as far, with respect to the Saviour whom he raised up, as the means of discovering him. He made choice of a crucified Christ, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs," and passed by all the great and high potentates of the earth, and the worldly pomp and grandeur, which men respect and dote upon.

9. To lay man yet lower, "that the Lord alone might be exalted," he chose not such persons as the world would have thought stood fairest for mercy ; but, for the most part, he chose the most miserable and contemptible : "Not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty are called ; but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of this world, to confound those that are

mighty ; and base things of this world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen ; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

10. The Lord by this let me see, 1. That it was to be expected, and was indeed inevitable, that a great opposition should be made to the gospel, and to the whole revelation of himself in the word. 2. That this opposition was principally to be made by pretenders to wisdom, learned men. 3. That their objections should be against all the concerns of the gospel, matter, manner, means, all being opposed to their expectations. And that therefore it was no wonder to see some stumble at the cross, some at preaching, some at preachers. 4. That their pleas should be very different and various: the Jews seeking signs, and the Greeks wisdom, according as their different principles and inclinations led them. 5. That it was to be expected, that their objections should be specious, they being suited to the wisdom, the natural apprehensions of all unrenewed men, and not brought to a compliance with the grand design of God. 6. That it was impossible for any man that was not brought to be a fool in his own eyes, to be wise in the matters of God, or to discern and approve of the wisdom of God in this whole matter.

Upon this discovery, I was fully satisfied, that though those things were in "the wisdom of God hid from the wise and prudent," yet babes might have a satisfying discovery of them, because it has "pleased the Father to reveal these things to them."

I was made to see, that this opposition of learned men, and their want of success in their inquiries, were so far from being a just prejudice to the truth of God, that, on the contrary, it was a strong confirmation of the truth of religion. Thus, "out of the eater came forth meat, and sweetness out of the strong." "While I thought to know this, it was too hard for me. Then went I to the sanctuary, and there I saw their end." Hence I was made to hope, "that though my heart and my flesh should, and did fail me, God would be the strength of my heart, and portion for ever;" that he would "guide me by his counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory:" and, therefore, "surely it is good for me to draw near to God, who has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain: He is good to the soul that seeks him, to them that wait for him. In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

I frequently found common and much-noised pretences against the most important truths of the Scripture, especially those which are controverted by Pelagians, Arminians, and Socinians, that they are contrary to reason, making considerable impression on my mind ; but this being rather by fits and starts, than for any fixed period of time, I shall shortly point at the springs of my relief from temptations of this sort.

1. God had, long before I got a full relief, fixed in me a deep rational conviction of the shortness of human knowledge, and that there is no truth we receive, whether upon the evidence of metaphysical, mathematical, or moral principles, or even on the evidence of our senses, against which there lay not insuperable objections, on which no man yet thought it reasonable to question those truths ; nor, though we would, yet could we not be satisfied, for those objections bring our minds to hesitate about many of them. This I was fully satisfied about, on the clearest conviction of reason and experience. And as this was one of the most considerable fruits of my studies in philosophy, so it was in many ways useful to me: For, 1. It made me

see through the vanity of that pretence against divine truths, that there lie unanswerable arguments against them. This I thought would not shake me, if once I saw sufficient evidence for them. 2. I was hereby brought under a conviction, that it was reasonable to expect more inextricable difficulties about truths supernaturally revealed, than about others, because they lie farther out of our reach. 3. When difficulties occurred, I was led rather to suspect myself of ignorance, than the truths of God.

2. When the Lord gave me the foregoing discovery of himself, he fixed me in the faith of his incomprehensibility. While he let me see his back parts, he convinced me that I could not see his face. He let me see, that his "ways are not as our ways." And after this I durst not any more attempt to measure him, or his ways, by my short line.

3. By this, likewise, I was brought to rest quietly in the determination of the word. I took all "to the law and to the testimony:" and where the word clearly interposed its testimony, my soul was now in some measure taught to acquiesce in, and stand to its determination.

4. When I found the subtle endeavours of adversaries to prevent my acquiescing in any particular testimony, and found myself unable at first to disapprove their evasions, I was much relieved by a view of the multiplied testimonies of the word, all running the same way, and declaring, as it were, with one mouth for the truth.

5. When, by consulting interpreters, especially critics, I found myself rather darkened than cleared, about the meaning of particular testimonies, I had recourse to the scope of the words, the plain meaning as it offered itself to view, with an humble dependence upon God for light as to his mind; and by this found my soul much more satisfied about the meaning of the word, than by the subtle hypotheses of bold critics, that are often injurious to truth.

6. When, for a time, by the subtle perversions of Scripture testimonies, I could not find the use of them, the analogy of faith supported my mind, as to the truth till I was in case to recover the particular testimonies out of the enemy's hand. When the Lord manifested himself from the word to me, he gave me a sweet view of himself, and of his design principally aimed at in the whole revelation he made of himself, and of the sweet and harmonious consent and occurrence of the principal doctrines of the Gospel, in promoting that design; and he let me see how the ends and the means were so closely linked together, that one of these truths could not be overturned, but almost all the rest must follow its fate. Therefore, whenever any of these truths was controverted, its connection with the other truths, uniformly and plainly attested by the current of the Scriptures, presented itself, and my mind was satisfied it could not fall, without they all fell. This I take to be the analogy of faith; and in this I often took sanctuary.

7. My mind has often been stayed by the concurrent suffrage of the pious in all churches, nations, and ages, witnessed in their particular writings and confessions of faith. I loved to walk in "the footsteps of the flock," that is, those of whose piety we had the best security.

8. The direct opposition, especially of the Pelagian notions, to my own experience, and that of all the fearers of God I conversed with, as well as the Scriptures, was a very great relief.

9. One thing that made me always read Arminians and Socinians with a just jealousy, was a clear view of their scandalous disingenuity in misrepresenting the opinions they opposed.

10. When I seriously viewed the difficulties they urged against the truth, I often found them involved in difficulties, and as deeply fastened and entangled in the same inconveniencies, or others as great, or fully greater.

11. The forementioned view of the design of the Gospel, as represented from the first of the Corinthians, was of great use.

12. God very often, when I was perplexed about particular Scriptures, gave me a view of their meaning in his own light, opened them to me, and, after him, temptations spoke not again.

Many other things, and considerations of a like nature, have been relieving to me; which, because they are too many and too long to be here narrated, I pass over. These mentioned may serve for a specimen.

I now come to give some account of my relief from another temptation, with which I have been continually exercised from my youth, and still sometimes am; and it respects death. I have above narrated what a continual bondage I was in "through fears of death," and how early these fears began: I shall now give some account of my relief.

1. I found the Lord's mercy manifested in Christ, free me from "the spirit of bondage," and acquaint me in some measure with that liberty that is the attendant of the "Spirit of adoption;" and hereby all my fears were much weakened.

2. The Lord, by that discovery he made of himself in Christ, removed, in a great measure, the grounds wherein I had hitherto feared death most, the want of evidence about the reality of things not seen, and sin, the sting of death; and by this my mind was much relieved, because I was now in some measure secured against both these fears.

3. The strong power of sin that I found still remaining, and the disturbance arising from it, made life not desirable; and a prospect of deliverance by death, and a more satisfying discovery of the Lord, made death appear more desirable.

4. As a natural aversion to death still continued, and I found still more fear upon a close prospect of it arising in my mind; I was much relieved by the promise of the Lord's helping me against temptation, and engaging for his people, that they should not be tempted "above what they are able to bear," but that, when the trial comes, he "will provide a way to escape."

5. My faith as to this promise was often strengthened by former experience; particularly, I remember one day travelling from Edinburgh to Leith, and meditating upon death, I was oppressed with fear, when the Lord mercifully suggested this scriptural thought, though not in the scripture words, Have you not shrunked formerly under the remote prospect of other trials? and have you not yet been carried honourably and safely through them? What reason have you to distrust God as to future trials, who has given grace formerly to help in time of need? This quieted my mind at the time.

6. With respect to this, it has always been very satisfying to consider, that it is no way necessary that God should give us grace before trials come, but that he should keep us humble and dependent, by reserving that in his own hand, and teach us to submit to his judgment as to the measure and time of performing his own promises, and giving the necessary supplies of grace.

7. My soul is quieted under all my fears of this trial, in some measure by the faith of this, that "the Lord is a God of judgment," and that "they are all blessed who wait on him" in the faith of his promises, not doubting

either of his faithfulness as to the accomplishment, or judgment as to the right timing and measuring them in proportion to our trials and necessities.

8. The Lord has often given me, when clouded by this fear, a sweet discovery of the beauty of this disposal, that we have promises to live upon till the trials come; and that when they come, we shall then get accomplishments to live on: "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Finally, the experiences of the Lord's faithfulness, recorded in history, and learned by report, or by my own observation, often helped to strengthen my faith of this; and here I rest to this day. I dare not say, I am ready to die; I dare not say, I have faith or grace sufficient to carry me through death; I dare not say, I have no fears of death: but this I say, there is grace enough for helping me, laid up in the promise; there is a "throne of grace," to which in our straits we may have recourse. He is "a God of judgment," who has the disposal, and who will not withhold it when it is really the "time of need."

PART IV.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS ORDINATION TO THE HOLY MINISTRY,
AND HIS CONDUCT THEREIN.

CHAPTER I.

Of his being licensed to preach the Gospel.

WHEN I was under the violent strugglings related in the second part of my life, I had laid aside all thoughts of the work of the ministry. It was like hell once to entertain a thought of preaching to others what I did not believe myself: but now things began to alter; and the Lord led me on to that which I declined before; and I find the steps of his providence respecting me in this matter deserve to be remembered by me. 1. My mother devoted me, from my childhood, to this work; and often expressed her desire to lend me to the Lord all the days of my life, to serve him in the Gospel of his Son. This has often had its own weight on my spirit. 2. The course of my studies had tended that way, my education pointed towards that work; which providential determination of my studies, though I sometimes had no great regard to it, yet, on other occasions it had some weight on my spirit, that I durst not rashly turn my thoughts another way. 3. The Lord forcibly, by his providence, broke my design of following the study of philosophy, by the foregoing exercise, of which I have given an account; brought my mind to acquiesce in this dispensation, and made philosophy comparatively distasteful; and it was, upon the serious review of the temptations moving my inclination that way, made extremely repugnant to me. 4. The Lord having thus turned my heart from that study, that for a while did rival it with the study of divinity, he did also, by the foregoing result of my dark exercise, remove and take away the

principal stumbling-blocks, and made the way straight. 5. He further, by the discovery of his glory in the face of Christ, engaged my heart, and endeared my soul to the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified. 6. He brought me under a lively sense of that forcible tie that was by this laid on me, to lay out myself in any way that he should call me to be serviceable to him; and I was made to think that I should be the more happy the more directly my work should tend that way. 7. While, like Peter, I was musing sometimes on these changes, about the month of April or May, 1698, to my great surprise, two ministers were sent from the presbytery of Kirkaldy, urging me to enter on trials. I altogether declined the proposal, because I had not read extensively, wanted the languages, and had been much diverted from study, particularly by the foregoing exercise, which had filled my thoughts for nearly a year and a half; and it was not then two years since I came from the college. In a word, I answered, "I am a child, and cannot speak." And here I remained, surprised and tossed with thoughts what this might mean, and whence it was, for I had scarcely ever looked near the presbytery. They prescribed John i. 12, for a text, and left me to consider of it. 8. I found my aversion strong to enter so soon at least on trials; but still it had some weight on my spirit, and I did think further of it, and found that the Lord's dealings with me of late, in the great variety of trials, casting me down, and raising me up again and again, looked like a preparation for "comforting others with the consolations wherewith I had been comforted," and sympathizing with them, as having had experience of a great variety of temptations; and I found, that by these my little knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel received some improvement. 9. The ministers continued to solicit me, and press home their desire; but while I stood out against their solicitations, though not without some secret struggle and doubting, whether in so doing I might not be declining duty, I began to observe the Lord raising a storm against me: I began to see the snares of the station I was in, the advantages my corruptions had against me by it; and, in a word, the Lord made it clear to me, that I behoved to change my station; but I was not hereby entirely at liberty to comply with my desire, yet I durst not flatly decline it. About this I was much troubled, May 20, 1698. The Lord was taking away some that had been most helpful and encouraging to me, my inward perplexities increased, and I was not like to have peace in my own mind. 10. While I was in this state, Mr Riddel came to the Wemyss, May 30, and after much conversation, and many reasonings, charged me to try and fix my thoughts on the text, and then do, or stand off, as the Lord should reveal duty; which I consented to. 11. But after all this, I still shifted and declined, and could not think of a compliance; and then, December 28, Provost Ramsay wrote, earnestly desiring me to take the charge of my Lord Maitland. This put me to a stand a little, and I was inclined to embrace it at first; but on further consideration, I was fully convinced I should reject that motion, and so I remained in my former strait, crying to the Lord frequently that he might discover my duty. I was fully satisfied that I behoved not to stay there, but yet was averse from the ministry, at least so soon. But that which had well nigh turned me quite away, was an express from the worthy Mr James Duncan, my friend and my father's, urging me, in the most pressing terms to take the charge of my Lord Duplin's children, offering what encouragement I pleased; my father's deep obligations to that family, and several other things, carried

my inclination strongly towards a compliance : but having, at Mr Forrester's earnest desire, undertaken a homily in the new college, which I was to deliver next week, I took time to consider of it ; and after I had, on February 23, 1699, delivered my discourse on Job xxviii. 28, I went to visit my acquaintance, worthy Mr Shields, who urged me to enter on trials, with that gravity and concern, that had more weight on my spirit than all that had been spoken to me. Upon this and other things that offered themselves to view, I was fully satisfied it was my duty to lay aside thoughts of Mr Duncan's proposal. 12. The presbytery of Kirkaldy, March 16, 1699, urged me to try a common head, and if I was not after that clear to proceed, promised to leave me to my choice ; to which I consented, and delivered it, April 20, when I accepted of a text, and they offered me Psalm cxix. 9, which I delivered May 10, and afterwards the exercise and addition, which I delivered before the synod that met about Mr Inglis' affair, May 23, and thereon took a popular sermon, being not a little encouraged by Mr Shields, who spoke again seriously to me after the sermon and exercise, which was on Rom. viii. 36. My popular sermon was on Psal. lxxiii. 24, which I delivered on June 22, and was licensed after I had gone through the usual trials. 13. As the Lord did, by the formerly mentioned conduct of providence respecting me, remove my scruples and clear my mind ; so his countenancing me in my first appearances, not only by supplying me for the work, but making it successful towards the awakening of some, and comforting of others, did not a little confirm and encourage me.

CHAPTER II.

On his entering on the Ministry at Ceres.

BEING thus licensed, June 22, 1699, at Kirkaldy, I continued preaching, as appointed or desired, for most part, every Lord's day ; blessed be God, not without some countenance and success. November 23, a call from South Leith came to me, where I had preached some time before. Mr Wishart the minister, with several elders, came with it ; and November 29, a call from Eli, where I also had preached, was put in my hand ; and much about the same time, a call from the parish of Ceres was put into my hand. I took them to consideration, and gave no manner of hopes to any ; I found myself in a great difficulty between Leith and Ceres, and it was much the greater that both stations lay not within the same province ; and so there was no judicature equally concerned in both, to whom I might submit, so that I was necessitated to make a choice myself. After some endeavours with my own heart, to bring it to a willingness to close with either as God should clear up my duty, I set myself to consider and ponder reasons on the one hand and the other ; and for Leith the following reasons had weight :

1. The importance of the station, and largeness of the charge.
2. The unanimity of their call, after they had been long otherwise.
3. The colleague was most desirable, and one from whom I might learn much, both as to preaching and discipline.
4. There was a considerable number of godly people in the place.
5. I should have the advantage of living in the

presbytery of Edinburgh, where there was unquestionably the fairest opportunity for improvement.

6. The Commission's interposition on behalf of Leith, by their letter.

On the other hand, for Ceres it was of weight,

1. That the parish was considerable, had been entirely without a minister for a long time, had been divided, and were now harmonious; whereas Leith was well supplied with one. 2. That whereas Leith lying near Edinburgh, they had the choice of young men, and had men of weight and activity, and interest to obtain whom they had a mind: it was otherwise with Ceres. 3. Where colleagues are most desirable, a collegiate life is not without such difficulties as should incline one not to run into them without an evident call. 4. I had not enjoyed time for reading, and could not in a town, and that so near Edinburgh, where the charge was so great, have any time for improvement; which I might hope for in the country, at least in the winter season. 5. The charge was less than the half of Leith, and my body was but weak. 6. I found my temper soft, and unmeet for managing the humours of town's people. 7. I found my best friends, whom I had reason to respect as designing nothing but my good, firm of the opinion that Ceres was the more suitable charge.

Having weighed all, and laid the matter before the Lord as I could, I at length came to a resolution, to reject the call of Leith, and did, January 2, 1700, give it up, and close with that of Ceres, to the great dissatisfaction of the minister and people of Leith, who had been at more pains with me than I deserved.

Being thus in some measure cleared to accept of the call of Ceres, that of Eli being no competition, I entered upon trials, and delivered my common head, *De Communicatione Idiomatum*, February 13, at Cupar, and my exercise and addition, on Galatians iii. 9, March 19; and April 16, I delivered my popular sermon on Revelation i. 6, and underwent the other parts of my private trials; and last, on May 1, 1700, was ordained at Ceres; Mr Alexander Pitcairn, minister at Kilmany, preached on Hebrews xiii. 17, and Sabbath next I began my ministry, on Acts x. 29, May 5, 1700.

CHAPTER III.

Of his management in the work of the Ministry.

AFTER he was licensed to preach, and before he was ordained to the ministry, on some solemn occasions he dedicated himself to the service of the Lord, with earnest prayer for the suitable endowments by which he might be fitted for the discharge of that high trust, if it should please God to call him to it. This occurs frequently in his diary, of which take an instance or two in his own words:

April 18, 1700, being the fast in order to Lesly sacrament, I rose early in the morning; and after some review of my former ways, and serious thoughtfulness of the design of the present duty, I did in prayer pour out my soul to God, confessing my sins; and I dare not say, but it was with some tender sense of the dishonour done to God, and of the wretched unkindness that is in them to God. Original sin, imputed and inherent, were

both heavy, as well as my particular evils. I did solemnly renew my engagements to the Lord, accepting of Christ according to the gospel offer and terms, and did endeavour particularly to repose faith on him, with respect to the ministerial endowments, and did devote myself to him in that service.

May 1, 1700, (being the day of his ordination). This morning I renewed my engagements to God, and accepted of Christ on the gospel-terms, casting myself upon him, not only for what belongs to me as a private Christian, but as a minister, looking to his strength for sustaining me in the whole of the work, particularly pleading for his presence this day; and I cannot deny but I had his presence in secret. Mr Alexander Pitcairn, minister of Kilmany, preached the ordination sermon, on Heb. xiii. 17, where he insisted on the watchmen's duty. I cannot deny but my heart was much oppressed with the sense of the greatness of the work; and after I had answered the questions put to me concerning my soundness in the faith, and the sincerity of my purposes in undertaking the office and work of the holy ministry, I was ordained. Lord, thou knowest what my heart's desire to thee was at the time. O Lord, help, and through grace I shall lay out myself for gaining sinners to thee.

Being thus entered into the ministry, he studied and prepared his sermons with much serious secret prayer for divine assistance and direction in his work, and for a successful blessing upon the word, both to himself and his hearers.

His practice also was to review and remark his behaviour; how he acquitted himself in public duties; as to what assistance and enlargement he obtained; as to the gravity, seriousness, tenderness in his own frame; as to his concern for the souls of hearers; as to the warming of his affections with the comforts and ravishing sweetness of divine truths. And when he was remarkably helped, it issued in thanksgiving to God, and watching against vain pride and self, that might not rob the Lord of the glory of his free grace. When otherwise, it was matter of humiliation to him.

Knowing that he was called to "watch for souls as one that must give an account," he had the weight of the ministerial charge much upon his spirit: he was, therefore, at pains to acquaint himself with the spiritual state of the souls of his flock, that he might be the more capable of dealing with them for their edification, according to their particular cases. In order to this, as far as health and strength allowed, he was diligent in visiting all the families within his parish, in instructing his people by the familiar way of catechising, and in marking their proficiency in the knowledge of the truths of the Gospel. At some seasons also, especially when he was about to administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper, he conversed severally with such as were to be admitted to that holy ordinance; not to bring them unto auricular confessions, but to try what sense they had of serious religion and practical godliness, what efficacy and influence the word of God had upon them, and what fruits of the preached Gospel were to be found in them, that he might deal accordingly with their consciences, and rightly divide unto them the word of truth. Take one instance of this in his own words, as they are found written, July 8, 1703, when he had laboured about three years in the ministry at Ceres:

I have, saith he, now spent about a month in converse with my people, and I observe the few following things.

1. That of three or four hundred persons, there were not above forty, who had not, at one time or other, been, in more or less, awakened by the word, though, with far the greater part, it came no length; whence, notwithstanding, it follows, 1. That where there is a faith-

ful ministry, it is not probable but most part are at one time or other in so far touched, as will be sure to issue in a dreadful aggravation of their guilt, in quenching the Spirit, and putting out light: for if so many were touched, so that they could remember of it, how many more may have been so, who have not noticed this? 2. The Lord leaves not himself without a witness, even in the bosom of his enemies, whereby he makes them feign submission; he gives the word such power as makes them feel that it is his, which tends to enhance their guilt.

2. All who were thus convinced did declare, that any awakenings they ever had, were either under the preachers in the field, or since the Revolution. This, whatever may become of the ministers, is a testimony to their way of preaching, and evinces that they are called of God.

3. The most judicious and deep-rooted malignants, did most frankly declare to me, that till the Revolution they were never touched with the word; there was never one that said he was touched by the curates, but, on the contrary, all declared otherwise; and the most zealous that way were most frank in making unsolicited confessions by the plain evidence of truth.

4. There has not been one Presbyterian minister in the parish since the Revolution, whom the Lord has not honoured to awaken many; besides their being helped to beget in some, through the gospel, a new and lively hope. I conversed with some, of whom I have reason to hope good things, even things that accompany salvation, that seem to have been brought in by all the Presbyterian ministers, who were there these fifty years by-past.

5. I observe, for which I bless the Lord, that besides not a few, whom the Lord has awakened under my ministry, some there are who seem to promise more than flowers, even fruit. And further, a general acknowledgement from most, that the word comes near them daily; which, 1. Makes me ashamed of my own negligence. 2. Adore God's goodness, that blesses my weak labours notwithstanding. 3. Encourages me to think, that whatever may be amiss, yet I have not run unsent.

6. I observe, that it is very hard to judge of the competency of knowledge in order to admission. And,

7. That knowing people estranged from the power of religion, are in the most deplorable condition imaginable: for I found it almost impossible to get such brought to any sense of their condition.

His ministerial concern was not confined to his parish of Ceres, but extended itself to the whole church: and the consideration of abounding errors, and the profaneness of the time, filled his heart with heavy and perplexing thoughts; as may be observed from the following hints.

Quest. What is the duty that is in a special manner called for from this church in this day? *Ans.* 1. Mourning: it is a day of abominations. 2. A serious endeavour to be rooted and established in the truths of religion; for there is an attempt to destroy the foundations, and temptations to final and total apostasy abound. 3. A shining gospel-walk, as a testimony against the horrid profanity of the time. O! that I might get my soul continually exercised herein. Blessed shall he be at this day, who, when the Lord comes, shall be found so employed. A sad neglect of those, gives ground to fear terrible things. One reason why the Gospel is so unsuccessful at this day is, because the simplicity of preaching is neglected. A due application of Scripture is best preaching, for confirming which, it is remarkable, that though God may make use of the words of man, in let-

ting into the meaning of it, yet it is the very scripture-word by which he ordinarily conveys the comfort or advantage of whatever sort, "it is this instrument of God's own framing that works the effect."

At another time, he saith, Having considered the growth of error, my heart is affected and filled with many heavy and perplexing thoughts: I saw, and daily see more and more, the growth of Arminian, Pelagian, and Socinian errors; this, with the growth of profanity that is visible, gives me a sad prospect of what may be a-coming. This observation that follows, was strongly fixed upon my thought. 1. The gospel truth, when first published, was pure without the mixture of error. Yet, 2. When it spread a little, errors quickly were vented to discredit it. 3. Errors in process of time increased; and the further off from the first times of the Gospel, the further off from the simplicity and purity of the Gospel. 4. When Christianity obtained external establishment in the world, then there was a remarkable increase of error. 5. Superstition and error at length overspread, and the Lord must both punish and purge. 6. The way he took to do both, was to give up, in the sixth century, to a general apostasy, under Mahomet in the east, and the Pope in the west: thus all these errors, as it were, run into one, or run together. That thus the churches were sufficiently punished by these two dreadful plagues; and that there was purgation by them is plain, in that after the Reformation, truth broke out with a beaming lustre and much purity. Since that time, error has had a second growth; whether the Lord may not take the same method of purging us again, by casting all into the furnace, we cannot tell; we must leave it to himself.

Some of the followers of Mrs Bourignon having come into his parish, and endeavouring to propagate their opinions, under the plausible pretext of singular piety and devotion, he thought fit to guard his people against that infection; a short account of which he gives in the following words:

April 20, 1707. This day the Lord directed me to strike at the root of prevailing delusions; in opposition to which I taught, 1. That true holiness will not admit of leaving out some duties, and that the devotees, while they withdrew from the world, omitted, 1. A testimony to the usefulness of the Lord's institution of worship. 2. Usefulness among men. 3. Diligence in their particular calling.

2. That holiness consists not in a strict observance of self-devised rules, such as many of theirs are.

3. That when men pretend to holiness in their walk, and neglect the institutions of worship, then none can conclude, that in any thing they are influenced by the authority of the Lord Jesus: for that same authority binds to the one as well as the other.

4. That the most effectual inducement to obedience, is a constant improvement of the blood of Christ by faith, and a sense of forgiveness kept up in the soul. "Lord bear home truth."

CHAPTER IV.

His judgment concerning several cases, especially with respect to his own exercise and practice.

Concerning times of trial.

CONCERNING fears of falling in times of trial, I was much troubled, and was quieted with the following remarks. 1. The fears of this which disquiet, are a part of that thoughtfulness for futurity which is forbidden. 2. These fears are founded on many wild suppositions, as that I should have strength proportioned to trials before they come, unto trials that may never come, that they who live upon the promises have not a sure foundation, &c. 3. That in 2 Cor. i. 9, "We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust in ourselves," was quieting. But, 4. My great relief, and that which has been my life, was that promise, 1 Cor. x. 13, "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." It is not what I have that makes me promise or expect to be carried through, but what is in Christ, and in the promises.

Of eternity and immortality.

I had some strugglings about the belief of eternity and immortality ; but was very much quieted, 1. By a clear view that eternity was wrapt up and implied in every truth of religion. 2. Especially by much light accompanying that Scripture,—“Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?” If there be not an eternity, man answers no valuable purpose with respect to God, or with respect to himself ; and so is indeed made in vain. This did more establish my soul than ever it had been in this truth, which let me see how soon God can make unbelief go back, and give peace in believing.

Of ministers consulting people in ministerial duties.

While I had occasion to speak and hear of some ministers being much swayed by the advice of good people, in difficult steps of their ministerial work, I was satisfied in the evident clearness of the following rules : 1. That it is very dangerous to lay too much stress upon the advice and opinions of the best of people, as to what may be sin or duty in matters that belong not to their station ; for the promise of the Spirit's teaching belongs not to them, as to what may be the duty of the minister's station ; therefore, 2. It is safer to desire the help of their prayers, that God may, according to his promise, clear to us, or discover to us what is duty, than to learn them to step out of their stations, and advise in things that belong not to them. 3. In consulting with others for light, regard should be had to the different talents of men, and most regard should be had, in matters of soul-exercise, to those whom the Lord has fitted with endowments that way. In matters of government, most regard should be had to those whom the Lord has fitted that way. 4. In judging if such are likeliest to know the Lord's mind, who walk the most closely, we should consider, when we judge of the closeness of walk, not only what men's walk is, but what their temptations are : for one's walk may be much influenced that way ; and

grace may be more in one in whom it appears not so much, than in others who appear to have more, when the one's grace is continually tried with floods of temptations working on it, and the other's is free.

Observe—Ministers, for the most part, are more shaken about the truths of religion, and the foundations, than about their own state; people, more about their state, than about the truths of religion. Ministers are helped to enlighten people, as to what they are straitened about; and people are, or may be helpful to ministers, in what they are in the dark about. Thus they naturally excel and are excelled, to humble both, and keep both in their stations.

To find duty in doubtful cases.

I was much refreshed with somewhat that occurred, clearing up a doubt to me, when at a stand which way to choose. 1. There is ever a bias to one way or other. 2. Seek to get that removed, and pray that God may bring your heart to an equal willingness to take either or neither way. 3. When this is attained to, then use reason, and take the most promising way. 4. Cry to him that he may put a stop, if you be out of the road. 5. If the Lord afford light in any other particular way, use it: but remember to seek light soberly, use it tenderly, and be wary in the application of it.

Of legal preaching.

I saw the evil of legal preaching, which lies in one of two things, or in both. 1. In laying too much stress upon the works of the law, our duties, and strength: Or, 2. In pressing evangelical doctrines without an eye to that which is the spring of the church's edification, the Spirit of the Lord. Some press duties, so that they seem to think, that their reasonings are able to enforce a compliance; or, at least, they do not take care to maintain, in themselves and hearers, a constant sense of the contrary, in order to engage in eagerness in dependence upon the Spirit of the Lord; this is legal preaching. O Lord, thou knowest how much of it is in this poor church! The gospel's glory is, that it is the ministration of the Spirit. The great privilege of believers is, that the Lord manifests himself to them, as he does not to the world. When he manifests his authority in the command, it is then powerful: when he manifests his goodness and truth in the promise, it is full of sweetness: when he manifests his wrath in the threatening, it awes the soul: when he manifests his glory in the face of Christ, it is ravishing, renewing, and attracting.

Atheism the root of sin.

Two things I shall note: 1. The Lord gave me a sweet discovery this day in the lecture, of the atheism of the hearts of men in rejecting the word (notwithstanding there are more and more evident prints of God on it, than on all his other works of creation,) because they cannot get through some difficulties in it; whereas there are many more difficulties in the works of God. The light by which this was set home, and illustrated in particular instances, was sweet. 2. Some days ago, reading Exod. ix. and x. chapters, and finding this, "that ye may know that I am God," frequently repeated, and elsewhere in places innumerable, as the end of God's manifest-

ing himself in his word and works; I observe from it, that atheism is deeply rooted, even in the Lord's people, seeing they need to be taught this so much.

That it is a high attainment in religion, to arrive to know that God is the Lord; and to believe that all sin is resolvable in darkness and unbelief as to this one point, that God is the Lord, and consequently, that all sin is reducible to atheism. That the great difficulty, which the whole of the divine revelation grapples with, is atheism; and that its struggle is to recover man to his first impressions of a God: this one point comprehends the whole of man's recovery; as atheism the whole of man's apostasy.

The Lord saw meet to bring him through many sharp trials, and to keep him under much soul-exercise in the vicissitudes of discouraging difficulties, and refreshing revivals upon his own spirit; that in his ministerial station he might from his own experience be the more capable of dealing suitably with others, according to their various cases and conditions. He also studied much a close acquaintance with his own state and frame, and was observant of the Lord's gracious dealings with him, as may be gathered from the following short hints:

July 2, 1702. The Lord, about this time, giving somewhat of a revival from a long deadness, I think myself concerned to notice the means by which I obtained this benefit. And, 1. It was signally promoted by converse with lively Christians: "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." 2. By some heavy strokes laid on me, the Lord did chasten me, and in some measure, teach me out of his law. 3. By terrible providences with respect to the public, the Lord did awaken me in some measure, "Awake, sleeper, call on the name of thy God." 4. The Lord providentially brought into my hands some papers containing the exercise of some noted Christians, wherein I saw how far short I was of others, and also not a few of the causes of my sadly withered and decayed case: "For this shall every godly one pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." 5. By some discovery of the vanity of my sweetest enjoyments: "Therefore I will go and return unto my first husband; for then it was better with me than now." 6. By leading me to some subjects which I choosed for others, in which my case was also remarkably touched upon, the Lord did in some measure awaken me: thus, while, with David, I heard only a parable at first, I was quickly told in the end, that I was the man.

March 11, 1705. This day I preached in my usual, I was far out of order: Lord pity and shine on me. At night I was somewhat refreshed in family worship; in meditation on my case, I saw unbelief to be the root of all my misery, and was broken on account of it: I cried to the Lord for relief against it, and that he might manifest himself to my soul: Lord, hear. I was much grieved with this, that in a time when so many strange evils abound, there should be such a strange stupidity on my spirit, that I could not mourn for the dishonour done to God; I cried for a spirit of supplication and repentance.

April 7, 1705. I was much disordered in body this day, and in little condition for any work, through indisposition, till towards seven at night, and then I was a little relieved, as to bodily disorder, and began to think of preparing for the Sabbath; and bowing my knees to prayer, I was full of perplexity, the Lord hid himself, my spirit was like to sink, "I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." I got no relief till after I had

made some preparation for the work of the Sabbath, and then my spirit was refreshed with that Scripture, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," which I a little explained in my sermon. By this I found my mind composed: but, O that it were with me as in months past!

His Case for some time.

April 17, 1705. I was much disordered in body till towards night, then I began to muse on the state of matters betwixt God and my soul; and finding, 1. A great withdrawing of influences in duty in secret, and family, and public. 2. Hereon deadness followed. 3. Hereon a languishing of all grace. And that, 4. Notwithstanding many loud calls to diligence, and to aim at more than ordinary nearness to God; I hereupon resolved, in the Lord's strength, to inquire into the causes, and cry for light as to them.

July 5, 1705. This morning, in prayer, the Lord pointed out further the evil of a neglect of distinct exercise about the guilt of sin. I shall represent the sweet discovery in the following hints.

My case was discovered, 1. I felt deadness. 2. Weariness in duty. 3. Aversion following thereon. 4. Deadness of spirit in general.

Causes of present deadness.

1. As to the guilt of sin, the sense of it impaired. 2. The discoveries of the want of spiritual strength, which thereon flows from the distinct observation of sins weakened. 3. The sense of darkness likewise impaired. 4. The intercourse with Christ, for light, forgiveness, and strength decayed. 5. This intercourse being the great mean of endearing Christ, and the sweetness of these communications being that which keeps up liveliness in duty; all these evils follow on the want of it. Bless, bless the Lord, O my soul!

Relief.

July 19, 1705. This day the Lord shined on me in duty, my heart was much composed, satisfied, and refreshed, and in some measure made to hope for a revival. Glory, glory, glory to free grace in Christ!

July 29, 1705. This day I was much refreshed with a view of the glory of the Lord Jesus in the ordinances: my soul was sweetened with a sense of his love, warmed, and composed in preaching upon Philip. iii. 3.

February 24, 1706. Being the Lord's day, and he being to preach, his state he relates thus: In the morning I was sore shaken about the truths of God, but came to peace as to what I was to speak, in three things. Lord thou hast fully satisfied me as to the utter vanity, and unsatisfactoriness of all other courses for satisfaction, as to our great concerns, besides that revealed in the gospel. Lord, thou hast fully satisfied me, that supposing the truth of the gospel, there is a plenary, and full security as to all that I can desire, with respect to time and eternity, in it. Lord, thou hast given me that full and rational evidence for the truth of the gospel, far beyond what would in other things fully satisfy me; and therefore it must only be the wretched unbelief of my heart that keeps me hesitating

here. I will look for faith to the Author of it. Of these I am so fixed, that no power of temptation has been able to shake me. All my doubtings flow from the power of unbelief, that will not be suppressed without an overpowering sense of divine authority. I preached, and was helped in public worship, being strengthened in body, and sweetened in spirit.

December 5, 1706. Meditation, on his taking a journey from his own house, before the dawning of the day.

What a different state am I in now, from what I was a little while ago ! then I was in a pleasant habitation, surrounded with wife, children, conveniences, in a habitation well illuminated with pleasant light, whereby I saw my enjoyments, discerned the pleasantness of them, and their suitability. I had necessaries, quiet of mind, and opportunity to retire to my closet, to converse with God, wherewith I was refreshed. But what a change do I now find ! I am engaged in a journey, my way is dark, I find it cold. Now, when I turn thoughtful, I fear every where ; fear where no fear is ! Now use and custom turn me secure, and I fear not where there is fear, I see no danger, and begin to conclude there is none. Have I not here a view of man's state in innocency, and his state when fallen ! But what a change do I find ! Light begins to appear ! Had I never seen it, I should have had no notion of it. What a surprise is this ! When did it begin ? How did it grow ? Where were my senses ? Did not I look on, and yet I cannot see and cannot tell how it began, nor whence ! " So is every one that is born of the Spirit." But sure it is ; one thing I know, whereas I saw nothing, now I see ; I see where I am, what is near about me ; I see where there is hazard, and where there is safety in the way I am in ; but what is at a distance I yet perceive not. The first dawning of saving light is not perceivable in its rise, in its progress, but unquestionable in its effects, and gives a view of the state in which I am at present.

But a new scene appears, light grows, I see at a distance, " but men appear as trees ;" pleasant trees, delightful fields, men, suitable to me, and friends appear as monsters seen with an imperfect light, my fears are quickened : and is it not so with young converts ? Light still increases, it grows, every new degree is inconceivable, and we have no notion of the discovery it makes. What before was dark and frightful, is now pleasant and agreeable. Imperfect views of the best things, give but misslapp'd notions ; light increasing satisfies as to them : " Eye hath not seen." " Truly light is sweet ;" even before the sun is seen, light is great, and is pleasant, makes the way pleasant, and gives pleasant discoveries ; but it cannot be without sense told or conceived, what satisfactory discoveries, what quickening warmth, the noon-day's sun affords.

Solemn self-examination.

January 11, 1708. In the morning I arose greatly indisposed, but somewhat relieved before I went to church ; yet immediately after sermon seized with a vomiting. Lord, teach and lead me to some suitable improvement.

Queries to be considered as to my private state.

1. Are daily sins, sins of infirmity, searched, observed, weighed mourned for ?

2. Is there care taken to exercise faith distinctly, in order to the pardon of them?

3. Is peace taken, when not powerfully spoken by the Lord?

4. Does the impression of the necessity and excellency of Christ's blood decay?

5. Are the experiences of its use and efficacy distinct as before?

6. Am I formal in worship, secret and private duties, craving blessing to meat, returning thanks, prayer, meditation, and reading, &c.?

7. Is there due care of educating my family?

8. Are rods observed and suitably improved?

9. Is there due concern for the flock? And singleness and diligence in ministerial duties, prayer for the flock, visiting the sick, &c.?

10. Is there sympathy with afflicted saints and churches?

11. Are the sins of the day mourned for?

12. Is the voice of the rod heard calling to, 1. Deniedness to the dearest relations? 2. Deniedness to the world? 3. To life? 4. Preparation for death? 5. Spirituality in duty?

January, 1709. In secret I looked up to God, and reviewed the state of my soul for the last year, since January 12, 1708. These queries had not been, alas! suitably regarded as they should.

1. Another year added, under many new calls to repentance and reformation, is not suitably improved.

2. Is not this the design of present indisposition, to rebuke for this?

3. Ah! the power of remaining sin, and enmity against duty, appears in diverting me from secret duties, indisposition for them, and for spirituality of mind, meditation, self-examination, prayer, reading the word, and liveness in them.

4. Is it not a rebuke for failures as to faithfulness in my station, that I am now put to silence?

5. Is there not a call, if the Lord spare me, to give myself wholly to the duties of my general and particular calling?

6. May not this indisposition be a check from prosecuting scholastic studies, and invite me to apply myself to a continuation of my experience.

Mercies I noticed last year.

1. Outward. 1. Though the Lord has chastised me sore, yet he has spared me. 2. When my work did call for it, about my own and others sacraments, I was wonderfully strengthened. 3. The Lord gives some prospect as to a termination of the confusions of my worldly affairs. And here, 1. Not all at once; this might tempt me to depend no more, or turn careless. 2. Not till the Lord had long exercised me with difficulties; this serves to humble me and keep me sober. 3. Lest all this should not do, he holds the rod over my head. O the goodness, mercy, and wisdom of God!

2. As to my soul's state, 1. The Lord kept me from despondency, though the distemper I labour under fosters that evil, yet I was kept from solicitude as to events. 2. The Lord kept me from being altogether secure and unconcerned, and kept up a desire of divine teaching while I was chastened. 3. I have been kept composed, and in a watching frame, though much under the hiding of his countenance. 4. He has not altogether ceased to be a reprover. 5. Sometimes I have had some manifestations of his counte-

nance, and hope as to the issue. 6. Some evidences of more than ordinary providence about me and my concerns.

As to my family, 1. The Lord has preserved us. 2. God has increased it. 3. God has directed us to servants sober and concerned; and however slowly we move, which I desire to lament before the Lord, yet we are desiring to look the same way as to our eternal concerns, at least there is none showing any thing of a dislike to either truth or godliness in my family: "Blessed be God for these." Lord, forgive my unthankfulness. Above all, blessed be God for the gospel.

If the Lord spare me to labour among this people, the following truths are offered in meditation, as most suitable to my case and theirs:

1. In the gospel there is the most sweet, honourable, profitable, suitable, and in all respects satisfying offer and proposal made, "A marriage with the King's Son," &c.

2. In the long run, the generality of those to whom this offer is made, even the more sober, that are not among the "remnant that use the servants despitefully, reject it, will not come, but make excuses."

3. An undue regard to things, in their own place lawful, is that which gives rise to this ill reception among the sober sort of people; at least, this is that with which they countenance themselves in that infidelity, in which, without blushing, they could not otherwise continue: "I have married a wife, I have bought a yoke of oxen, a field," &c.

4. In times of prosperity, or when the church is under no present trial, even the godly may decay, and turn secure, fall from their first love, and with the foolish virgins, sleep.

5. The rise of this evil is to be carefully discovered. 1. Reminders of enmity. 2. Change of condition, with the want of judgment how to give every duty its own place and time, so that one may neither jostle out another, nor drive to a careless management, doing this without leaving the other undone. 3. The cunning of Satan, enforcing one duty to a neglect of another, as in Christ's temptation.

This night I obtained such a view of my guilt, that nothing could have kept me from despondency, but a view of that grace that cannot be measured, but it is best conceived by that astonishing evidence of it, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" In the view whereof, I desired to live, and die, and spend eternity.

At night I was much refreshed in converse about some of these things.

"Clouds return after the rain." This, in time of a sore fit of sickness, impressed me. Lord keep me from security, remember me in pity. "Lord thou knowest my frame."

His health was much broken for some years before his death; and somewhat of his exercise in sickness may be learned from the following instance.

October 12, 1709. I was seized with a violent illness. In three days' time, I was brought to the gates of death; but it pleased the Lord to bless the means that were used, and it began to abate.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. The causes of the Lord's contending with me were many, but were all reducible to this one, woeful remissness in the tenor of my walk, and neglect to stir up myself to take hold of God in the lively spiritual attendance on the Lord, in all the ways of his appointment.

2. I found myself, on the approach of trouble, at a great loss: the Lord hid himself, the Spirit breathed not on the promises,—all was dark.

3. I had a multitude of anxieties, and there was no other way, but to roll them over on the Lord. That which oppressed me most, was concern about my soul's state. As to this, I observe,

4. That though I found not that comfortable evidence of it, that sometimes I have done, yet I durst not quit this hold, "that the Lord had made with me an everlasting covenant." And though many difficulties on all hands surrounded me, I stood resolved to throw myself on free redeeming love, and to venture my surviving wife and children on the Lord's tender mercies.

5. As to my trouble, God kept me, 1. Submissive, justifying the Lord, without repining at my circumstances. 2. He quieted my solicitude about events in a great measure, and to commit the disposal to the Lord, crying for a removal of any aversion to the Lord's will.

6. As to my work, though I wanted not heavy compunctions, especially as to the want of secret wrestling with God, and that frequency in it, for the success of the word among my people, and their salvation; yet it was refreshing, though I durst not trust in any thing but sovereign grace, that I durst say in the sight of God, without my heart condemning me, 1. That I was concerned to know the truth. 2. That I durst not express my own conceits. 3. Nor did I keep back what might be profitable. 4. I preached on what I resolved to venture my own soul. And, 5. I desired to preach home to their consciences.

CHAPTER V.

Of his marriage and conduct in his family.

MR HALYBURTON had begun this head in the following words:—

This being also a considerable change in my lot, and God's providence being to be remarked in this, as in other things, about which he is particularly concerned, "a good wife being from the Lord, who sets the solitary in families," I shall notice some things here.

1. At the same time the Lord convinced me, that it was not meet I should be alone, he also clearly convinced me, "that a prudent wife is from the Lord;" and therefore I looked, and cried to, and waited on the Lord for direction, with that eminent freedom, assistance, and preparation of heart, as gave me some ground to hope, that he would incline his ear to hear.

2. My great difficulty was the way by which I might know his mind, as to the person upon whom I was to choose and fix. The command, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," in the strictest sense, was powerfully impressed upon my soul; insomuch, that no prospect of outward advantages whatever could have swayed me to make choice of one whom I thought void of the fear of God. But whether in my choice to proceed upon the information and testimony of godly persons, and concurring providences justifying their testimony, and clearing the way; or whether per-

sonal and particular acquaintance were not previously necessary, was my difficulty.

3. I inclined to think this last necessary, which, whatever pretensions it was supported with, proceeded from too much dependence on my own understanding, and that joined with a distrust of the providence of God, which was the beginning of my mistake.

4. The narrowness of my acquaintance, which was confined to a very few of that sex, increased my difficulty, and had a considerable influence on the wrong choice I made. The person I pitched on wanted not several things which I disliked; yet she appearing to be more suitable than any of whom I had a particular acquaintance; and falling at that time under some unusual concern about religion, which she imparted to me, it looked like a providential clearing of the way, and ground to hope the removal of what I disliked in her walk; upon which I too hastily proceeded in the proposal.

5. I durst never absolutely pray for success; but had great freedom and liberty in pleading that the Lord would direct me; and that, if it were not for my spiritual advantage, it might be effectually crushed, and that my way might be hedged in.

Meanwhile, this gentlewoman carried on an intrigue with another, to whom she was clandestinely married, and, in the good providence of God, Mr Halyburton was thereby fairly disengaged. And being thus happily disappointed in this, he sought direction of God in reference to a design of marriage with another; and also set apart some time expressly for this purpose. An account whereof follows, as it was found written by himself.

December 13, 1700. This forenoon I set apart for prayer; and being to address God in reference to my proposal of marriage with J. W., I judged it suitable that I should begin the work with some inquiry into my own state, knowing that one unacquainted with Christ has no reason to expect acceptance in prayer. Therefore, after some serious application to God in prayer for the assistance of his Spirit, to make a true discovery of the state of my soul, I found it as follows:

With respect to God.

1. Under a full conviction, that "life is in his favour," nay, his "loving-kindness is better than life."

2. The like conviction I was under, that any interest in this favour, admittance to, or acceptance with this God, is utterly impossible, without having respect to a Mediator. God "being one that will by no means clear the guilty," I being guilty; God being holy, I unholy; "God a consuming fire," and I one, in respect of sin, meet to be devoured; I cannot see God without a Mediator and live.

3. That God out of mere love, without regard to any thing in sinners, has been pleased to appoint, furnish, and send into the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Mediator, through whom sinners might be accepted of him.

With respect to Christ.

Notwithstanding the frequent and lamentable prevalency of sin against light, against resolutions, vows, engagements, strivings, and prayers; yet I must say, that no alteration of my condition has ever been able to shake me from a conviction of the following particulars, since the Lord first convinced me:

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is such a Saviour, as became the grace, mercy, love, wisdom, holiness, righteousness, justice, and power of God to provide; and, on the other hand, such a Saviour as became the condition of sinners and their desires; and therefore deserves their acceptance, as fit, suitable, sufficient, "to save all that come to God through him;" and that even "to the uttermost," his blood being able to "cleanse from all sin," and his Spirit sufficient to "lead unto all truth." God knows what heart-refreshing sweetness I found in a view of the glory of God's wisdom, holiness, power, &c. in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. That I do need him in all his offices. No time, either when things did go better or worse as to my sense, durst I, for my soul, think of separating his offices. God knows that my heart was as much reconciled to his kingly, as to his priestly office; and that it would for ever oppress and sink me, were it not that he has a power, whereby he can captivate every thought to the obedience of himself. His reign, God knows, I desire.

3. I dare appeal to the searcher of hearts, that it is my desire above all things, to "be found in him;" and never doth sin reduce me to that state that I dare admit a thought of the insufficiency of this way of salvation to save me, or of having recourse to any other, or of abandoning this; but the more that sin prevails, the more I see the excellency, sufficiency, suitability, and indispensable necessity, of this way of salvation, and of my adherence to it, and rejecting all others.

4. All my hopes, as to freedom from that darkness, which is my burden, is from Christ's prophetic office; and my hope of freedom from the guilt, pollution and power of sin, and acceptance with God, arises from his priestly and kingly offices. In one word, I have no hopes of any mercy in time or eternity, but only through him; it is through him I expect all, from the least drop of water to the immense riches of glory.

As to the law.

Notwithstanding my frequent breaches of it, I dare take God to witness, that,

1. I count all his "commandments, concerning all things, to be right."

2. That I desire inward, universal conformity to them all without reserve, and that in their spiritual meaning and extent, as reaching all the thoughts, words, and actions, and even the most minute circumstances of these.

3. That I would not desire any alteration in any of his laws, but, on the contrary, do see the greatest excellency in those of them which thwart my inclinations most; which,

4. Occasions at all times, when not under the immediate violent influence and hurry of some impetuous temptation, a habitual and strong desire of conformity to God's law, my heart ever breathing, with the Psalmist, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

5. Since the commencement of this affair, particularly, I have seen a peculiar beauty in the law, as exemplified in the life of our Lord, who "fulfilled all righteousness," doing always the thing that pleased the Father, and more particularly in his absolute and unlimited submission to the divine will, even in those things which did oppose the natural inclinations of his innocent nature. And though at times I could scarce reach this submission in reference to this affair; yet, 1. I would be made submissive. 2. I

look upon it as exceedingly amiable. 3. I desire it, and condemn myself, in as far as I come short of it.

6. God knows, I desire "to hate every evil way," and would be free from every sin.

As to my frame and success, I can say, I thought it issued in calmness and composure; and as to this affair, contrary to my positive resolution, I was carried out to be more peremptory than usual, as to the success, though under fears of a refusal; yea, though I had my spirit in a more submissive frame, yet now I was more peremptory as to the event than when my heart was most eagerly set upon the thing.

January 17, 1701. This day was set apart by J. W. and me, at parting, to be kept, in order to our obtaining a blessing upon our marriage.

In the morning I began this day with prayer, in which I endeavoured to trace back sin to my very infancy, and found the Lord countenancing me, by bringing sin to remembrance. Lord, I have been in all sin; not one of thy commands but I have broken, and that almost in all instances, save that I have been kept from the outward acts: and no thanks to me that it is so; for, Lord, thou knowest it was only thy restraining grace that kept me from any sin. O! how ignorant are they of their own natures! or else of how far different natures from mine, are they that deny original sin. It may be, some of them, had they been acquainted with my way and manner from my youth, would have been apt to think me of a good nature, and not given to evil; but O how ignorant are they who think so! though I had not the ensnaring influence of bad company to draw me aside, yet without temptation I was inclined to sin, and that against nature's light, very early. Whatever others speak of their good natures, Lord, I must own mine sinful, and that all "the imaginations of the thoughts of my heart have been only evil" from my youth up. When I look at my face in the glass of thy holy law, Lord, how dark is it? Nothing but sin wherever I set mine eye.

The Lord helped me to confess my sin, and thereby gave me a fresh sight of the need of Christ in all his offices, of his excellency, sufficiency and suitableness; and drew out my soul solemnly to accept of him, renouncing all other ways of salvation, devoting myself in my station as a minister to him, waiting for, and expecting from him, (according to his most gracious promise and office as the Prince exalted to give gifts to men, such supplies of gifts and grace, as are needful for my faithfully labouring in the discharge of that office. Likewise, I solemnly devoted myself in this new relation I was to enter to him, pleading that he would not contend with either of us for the sins of our single life, that he would make us holy, and grant us to walk before him, and that he would bless us with all the comforts of a married state, fitting us every way for one another.

In my second address to God by prayer, the Lord gave me much sweetness and enlargement, in reference to that particular, for which I set apart this day: "Blessed be God for his Spirit's directing what to pray for, and assisting in praying; I hope this shall be comfortable. When he prepares the heart to pray, he inclines the ear to hear."

I looked on it as a part of the duty of the day, to search into my state; and after serious application to God for his Spirit, that, "searches the deep things of God," to assist me, I pitched on the following evidences of the Lord's gracious work upon me.

1. The Lord has given me, by his Spirit, some discovery of my sin; and here the Spirit has been, (1.) Particular. He has fixed upon innumer-

able particular sins of different kinds, fixing mine eye upon time, place, and circumstances. 2. He has been very full, letting me see myself guilty of all sin : this day he took me to all the commands, and did clearly lay before me innumerable breaches of every one of them. 3. He has discovered to me the sins of all the different periods of my life, infancy, childhood, and youth. 4. He has discovered to me spiritual evils, selfishness, pride, unbelief, and aversion to God. 5. He has given me a full view of the sin of my nature, as the root of all these things, an amazing discovery of its enmity to God, of its propensity to every sin, of its impotency and aversion to every good thing, and of the utter impossibility that ever it should lead me to any thing that is really good. 6. The Lord has discovered the guilt and hatefulnes of those sins, so that I have been made to loathe myself on account of them.

2. The Lord has discovered to me the vanity of all those reliefs to which nature leads, and that first, as to the guilt of sin, he has made me see, that my duties cannot save ; and I hope has taken me off from resting upon them ; for, 1. Under disquietudes occasioned by sin, nothing, save Christ, could quiet me ; duties have rather increased than allayed them, when depended on. 2. The Lord, when I have been most assisted in duties, took such care to guard me against this, that he then always opened mine eyes to see a world of sin in them. And here, 3. I have been made with as much concern to desire to be saved from my best duties, as ever I was from my worst sins. And, 4. The Lord, from the discoveries he made to me of my heart's inclining at some times, to lay some stress upon duties when spiritually performed, has stirred up in my soul, a jealousy of my heart in this particular.

3. As to the power of sin, by manifold sad experiences, I found it too hard for my prayers, vows, tears, resolutions, &c. ; so often has this been felt, that I have been brought to an utter despair of relief this way.

4. The Lord has been pleased to determine my heart to choose the way of salvation, revealed in the Gospel, through faith's acceptance of, and resting on Christ Jesus for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This the Lord brought me to approve of, 1. As the only way of obtaining these things. 2. As a way full of admirable wisdom. 3. As a way full of wonderful love. 4. As a way of great peace and security to sinners. 5. As a way suited to give glory to God. 6. As a way suited to honour Christ. 7. As a way suited to honour the Spirit of God. 8. As a way suited to honour the law.

Now, in all these particulars, I thought this way incomparable ; and my approbation of it was evident, in that I found, 1. Every day my detestation of all other ways to increase. 2. I found every day the necessity of this way. And, 3. I found that the more I looked at it, the more I loved it, and admired it, as full of all that can make it desirable. 4. I found in myself an approbation of the law, and holiness of God in it. I am now satisfied, that the law is holy, just, good, and spiritual : " The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be." But blessed be God, that enmity I once had against the law of God is removed.

Evidences of that Enmity.

1. I found in my mind a stated dislike at spiritual-mindedness, and at the

law's enjoining it. 2. I had a complacency in being freed from all attendance upon duty. 3. I would fain have had some of God's law altered.

Evidences of its removal.

1. The Lord remarkably reconciled my heart to these laws, which formerly I would gladly have had altered, so that I would not have them by any means taken away. And this proof is the stronger, in regard that, 1. I find these sins deeply rooted in my nature, which these laws do oppose. 2. I have manifold temptations to them. 3. I have to regret that I am too often overcome by them.

2. When I fear hell and damnation on account of my breaches of the law, yet God knows this never occasions such dislike, as fear of offending him.

3. I desire no alteration, no change, to be made of the law; God knows, I would have my heart brought to it, and not it to my heart.

4. I find a constant shame and self-loathing for short-coming, and want of conformity to it, and that in these instances, wherein none, save God and my own conscience, are witnesses.

5. I find extraordinary satisfaction, when any degree of conformity to it is attained.

6. The ordinary and serious breathing of my soul is such as that of the Psalmist's throughout the 119th Psalm.

Upon these grounds, I do conclude, that the Lord has wrought faith in me, and therefore will save me, and complete what concerns me; and because he has determined me to choose him, therefore I dare call him, "My God, my Saviour, my Sanctifier." The Lord this day helped me to plead for strength against sin; and "my God will hear me:" I have reason, when I have done all, to say, I have done nothing; I cannot serve the Lord."

In the beginning of this affair, in March, 1700, I was confident to meet with a disappointment; I was resolved to quit it, and did so for some time: God, by one means or other, broke all my projects to turn away; he kept me intent in observing his providences; he gave an opportunity, directed to means I had not thought on, and prevented my fears as to those which I thought most opposite.

After I had the greatest prospect of encouragement, I met with discouragements; and then encouragement when least expected.

I had been kept off means, kept low as to thoughts of myself, and kept in dependence on God as to the issue.

The thoughts of which things made me, with much sweetness, promise good at the hand of God.

In prosecution of his purpose, he was married at Edinburgh, January 23, 1701.

As God blessed him with children, it was his constant practice to devote them to the Lord: he was much in prayer for his family, submitting all his and their concerns to the divine disposal, as to life, health, &c. But most earnest was he for their souls' eternal welfare; an instance of which follows.

March, 1705. An account of my Exercise, with respect to the state of my youngest child's soul, a girl of eleven months' old, represented in a few Observations.

1. Two years ago, when my son died in the birth, I was much concerned in desiring some satisfaction as to his eternal state, but obtained no par-

ticular promise at that time ; except only, 1. That I was made to bless God that I had no ground to fear the worst, as I might have had, if he had been come to age. 2. I was made to look to the extensive promise of the covenant, that is "to us and our children." 3. I had peace in this, that I had devoted him to the Lord as soon as I found him to live.

2. When my daughter fell into a languishing sickness, and death evidently began to be threatened, I was put to more close exercise about her eternal state.

3. I was sometimes much enlarged in her behalf, but was unwilling to rest here, but humbly desired, that the Lord would, as to her state, give me some ground from the word to hope.

4. That I might not be wanting in the use of the means of the Lord's appointment, I consulted books, and the experience of such of the Lord's people to whom I had access, to see what I might expect, but found no satisfaction ; yet I resolved to wait on the Lord, and cried to him.

5. When I cried to him, I found for a considerable time no answer, but heavy rebukes, 1. For not observing returns by the word, as I should have done. 2. For not seeing more this way, and resting too easily without this. 3. For not studying the word so much as I should. Thus the Lord dealt with me as with Israel, Judges vi. 7—10. When they cried, before he sent deliverance, he sent a reproof.

6 The Lord, further to humble me, visited me with several afflictions, my wife's sickness and my own.

7. When I was in this distress, I cried to the Lord, and in prayer he relieved me by that passage, "Suffer little children to come unto me." As to which I remark, 1. While I was in prayer, crying for mercy to the child, it was then suggested. 2. The Lord showed me in it, that it was the parents who brought their children to Christ, desirous of his blessing them. 3. The disciples were against Christ's taking notice of them, or putting any particular mark of respect upon them. But Christ rebuked them, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Though the disciples would not have us to expect any evidence of the Lord's special love to young ones, yet the Lord is of another mind. 4. The Lord approved of the parents bringing the children, and blessed them. 5. Here the Lord enlarged me, helped me to rely on him, that he would put his hand on the child, and bless her, and thereby quieted my soul, and filled me with thankfulness ; and I was relieved as to the child that is gone, and this one that is dying : "Bless, bless, bless the Lord, O my soul ! he prepares the heart to pray, and he will incline the ear to hear. Remember the word on which thou causedst me to hope."

April 11. The child died : "Blessed be God I have had a child to give at his call, and blessed be the Lord that he helped me to give her willingly."

Another instance, at the death of his son George : March 23, 1712, the Lord's-day, a day to be remembered by me, a day wholly spent in prayer and praise, an introduction to life : "O my soul ! never forget what I this day felt, I reached. My soul had smiles that almost wasted nature." My kind colleague and I prayed alternately : "O such a sweet day !" About half an hour after Sabbath, my child, after a sharp conflict betwixt nature and the disease, slept pleasantly in Jesus, to whom pleasantly he was oft given.

Mercies and grounds of hope.

The Lord from the beginning fixed our eye on himself, and kept us submissive and dependent as to the child.

At the commencement, the Lord brought the disease pleasantly on; gave him astonishing patience, when for several days and nights he slept none.

The Lord gave warning by this, that though the child, I believe, scarcely knew his mother's name or mine before, but named us always father and mother, in his sickness, when asked who we were, he answered, Thomas Halyburton and Janet Watson. Here the relation was disowned which struck me at the first, and I thought the relation was loosed. His mother one day asked him why he called her so? But he returned no answer. I asked him some days after he took it, George, would you be well, and live, or die, and go to heaven? I expected a child's answer, but he readily, and more readily than was consistent with his usual way of speaking, said, "I will go to heaven." I had here some check for not being serious enough in the question; and this death I expected.

I had all this winter been extraordinarily helped in crying for mercy for the children; and any relief I had, and loosing of my bonds, was when I directed my prayer this way; often got I freedom to throw them on sovereign grace, often to speak to them directly from the word at night, and not more than about a month before this from Jacob's last words. I thought now God was to make a trial in the tenderest point, whether I should stand to it, and hold by the oft repented resignation.

I could not find freedom in seeking the child's life, but much in crying for mercy to him, and a token for good.

When he first fell ill, the burden was great on my spirit, till that night after my kind colleague and I had communed with much concern about the present state of the church, and of religion in this place: concern for the Lord's interest got far the ascendant in my heart, and my own dearest concerns sank; and from that time the Lord scattered the clouds, and comforted me as to my present weighty concern for the child; and that, 1. In giving me enlargement to bless him, that I had no positive grounds to call in question his state. 2. The Lord gave me to lay stress on his command of bringing little ones to him; nay, he caused me to hope on that word, and on the promise reaching to children. 4. The nearer to his end, the more I was loosed from him, the more cheerful was my resignation, submission, and humble confidence in refreshing, purifying, and quickening my spirit. 4. The Lord led both me and others to express confidence, that we could not avoid it. My kind colleague and I spent the whole day in prayer with and for him; and he in his turn praying just when the child was dying, even could not hold short of this, "We desire to believe, we hope, nay, we are confident, he is entering into glory." 5. Whereas he had been free of the restlessness and delirium for forty-eight hours before his death, he came to have some little struggles at last, though without contortions; I was put to cry for pity as to this, and that as a token for good, and was heard. 6. That same grace that prepared the heart to pray, inclined the ear to hear, kept the soul cheerfully to resignation, and not only composed, but sweetened our spirits; so that before his death, prayers were well nigh made up of praises, and he was set off with thanksgiving.

CHAPTER VI.

Of his entering on the Profession of Divinity.

THE place of professor of Divinity in the New College in the University of St Andrews being vacant, a proposal was once and again made to Mr Halyburton of procuring him an appointment to that situation ; but he gave no encouragement to it, resolving to be in no way the disposer of his own lot. And in December, 1709, being informed that her Majesty's patent was granted in his favour, he said, " Lord, crush it, if it is not for thy glory." Herein I have peace that I had no hand in it.

The Queen's patent being forwarded, the College applied to the presbytery of Cupar, for getting Mr Halyburton loosed from his pastoral relation to the parish of Ceres, in order to his being settled professor of divinity in St Andrews. But that reverend judicatory did, in February, 1710, refer the matter to the provincial synod of Fife, which was to meet at St Andrews in April thereafter ; and the matter being gravely debated before the synod, and the people of Ceres fully heard in what they had to say, the desire of the College upon her Majesty's patent was granted without a contradictory vote.

Upon the whole, Mr Halyburton had the following reflections :

As to this affair, " It seems to be of the Lord," For,

1. The first rise of it was without any thing so much as a thought in me.

2. The Lord crossed all other attempts, and disappointed other prospects which they had to others.

3. The Lord kept my spirit, and held me so by the hand, that I durst give no insinuation or encouragement that way.

4. The desires of many that feared the Lord ran this way.

5. The Lord laid his hand on me, and therein seemed to say, I was not likely to be able for the work in my present large congregation.

6. As the Lord began it with me, so did he carry it on, over obstructions remarkable enough.

7. I had no reason to doubt the singleness of any concerned, and who acted in it.

8. When I began to compare the course of the Lord's dealing with me, and the course of my studies, I could not deny, that there might be something in it.

9. My people, whenever the matter appeared, began to faint.

10. Their consciences were affected with the preponderating evidence of the reasons, as was mine ; though inclination lay opposed to it.

11. The Lord condescended to bring the matter to a decision of the most competent judicatory.

12. The Lord condescended to clear me as to submission. 1. By that which I resolved, after serious prayer to the Lord, viz. that since there was a present harmony betwixt me and the congregation, I should go as far as they inclined. 2. This being proposed in a full meeting of the elders, they all unanimously declared, they designed to acquiesce in the sentence of the synod. 3. It was my desire to the Lord, that there might be some evidence of the Lord's attending the determination ; and I dare not deny, but that even beyond expectation, to the conviction of all my own people, there was,

1. Evidently a great weight on the spirits of the members about light to direct them. 2. The Lord was remarkably with Mr Hogg, who prayed before the vote. 3. When I retired, I cried to the Lord, that if the matter was not for his glory, he might put a remarkable stop to it: if it was, that he might carry it on in a way that he might give evidence of himself. 4. The synod inverted the course of the rolls, casting St Andrews and Cupar last, that two presbyteries that were not interested might be first. 5. There was not one contradictory vote; only the presbytery of Cupar forbore to vote, because they could not vote against the transportation, and would not irritate the parish. 6. When all this was intimated, it was done with a convincing light by Mr Grierson, the moderator, *pro tempore*. "The will of the Lord be done." I had peace and composure in my own mind, the Lord condescending even beyond expectation. "Now, Lord, fit me for what thou dost evidently call me to."

On April 26, 1710, he was by the Principal of the New College admitted professor of divinity there; and delivered his inaugural discourse, in confutation of an atheistical pamphlet, entitled, *Epistola Archimedis, ad Regem Gelonem*.

Being admitted professor, he enjoyed not much sound health in the exercise of that office; for, in the beginning of April, 1711, he was suddenly seized with a dangerous pleurisy, which obliged his physicians to take from him a vast quantity of blood; and though he was relieved of that disease, yet he never fully recovered his former strength, by reason of the indisposition of his stomach, and frequent vomiting, which prevented the regular supply of blood for the nourishment of his body. In the following winter, a coldness, swelling, and stiffness in his legs ensued, with frequent and excessively painful cramps. But, besides his bodily indisposition, the grievances of the church of Scotland not a little added to his trouble. His spirit was much oppressed with the melancholy news of the toleration, and restoring the power of presentations to patrons; and no less with the imposing of the oath of abjuration upon ministers, from the apprehensions he had of the sad effects that might follow upon their different sentiments about the lawfulness of that oath. He freely declared his own opinion in the meeting of the Synod at St Andrews, April 1712. And in the conferences of the presbytery upon that matter, he advised, that ministers, after all due means of information, should act according to their light. But what he especially endeavoured to inculcate, as he had access, was, that the difference among them about the meaning of an expression in that oath, gave no just ground for any alienation of affection, or for division and separation, either among ministers or people.

An account of some of his last words, on his death-bed, September, 1712.

Wednesday, September 17. When a friend came and asked him in the morning, how he had rested the bye-past night? he answered, Not well; and told, he had this night been sore tossed with the thoughts of eternity; but, said he, I dare not say they were distracting. My evidences are much clouded indeed, I have been thinking on the terrible things of God, and all that is difficult in death to a saint. All my enemies have been round about. I have had a great conflict, and faith like to fail. O that I may be kept, now in this last trial that is coming, from being an offence to his people.

Afternoon, when some of his brethren came in to visit him, he said to

them, "I am but young, and have little experience; but this death-bed now makes me old; and therefore I use the freedom to exhort you to faithfulness in the Lord's work. Ye will never repent this. He is a good master; I have always found him so; if I had a thousand lives, I would think them all too little to employ in his service."

All this day, and some days preceding, he was under a cloud and desolation.

September 18. When a friend returned to ask him, how he was in the morning, he broke silence with these words, "O what a terrible conflict, had I yesterday! But now I can say, 'I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith.' Now he has filled my mouth with a 'new song, Jehovah-jireh, in the mount of the Lord, &c. Praise, praise is comely for the upright.' Shortly I shall get another sight of God than ever I had, and be more meet to praise him than ever. O the thoughts of an incarnate God are sweet and ravishing! And O how do I wonder at myself, that I do not love him more, that I do not admire him more! O that I could honour him! What a wonder that I enjoy such composure under all my bodily trouble, and in view of approaching death! O what a mercy that I have the use of my reason, till I have declared his goodness to me!"

To his wife, he said, "He came to me 'in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters;' and he said to me, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; I was dead, and am alive, and live for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death;'" and added, "He stilled the tempest, and O there is a sweet calm in my soul!"

Afterwards, when desired to be tender of his health, he said, "I'll strive to last as long as I can, and I'll get to my rest ere it be long. I have no more to do with my time, but to measure it out for the glory of God."

Then he said, "I'll see my Redeemer stand on the earth, at the last day; but I hope to see him before that, the 'Lamb in the midst of the throne.' O it will be a beautiful company: 'The spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the covenant!' O for grace, grace to be patient to the end!" Then he desired a minister to pray.

After prayer, he called for a little water to wash his eyes, and said, "I hope to get them washed, and made like dove's eyes; and then farewell sin, farewell sorrow."

In a little, when taking some refreshment, he said, "You see I am eating heartily here. I get sleep from him, and I get food and drink from him, and I'll get himself. 'My heart and my flesh fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever, &c. but we have need of patience.'"

When one said, "Keep the light of the window from him, it may hurt his eyes," he said "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing to behold the sun, the Sun of Righteousness; O glorious light, where 'The Lamb is the light of that temple?' We cannot have a conception of it now; 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard,' &c."

Seeing his youngest child, he caused them to bring her to him, and said, "Mady, my dear, 'the Lord bless you; the God of your father, and of my father, bless you; the God that fed me all my life, the angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless you' and the rest, and be your portion. That is a goodly heritage, better than if I had crowns and sceptres to leave you. My child, I got you from him, and I give you to him again."

To his wife, he said, "My dear, encourage yourself in the Lord; he

will keep you, though you even come among enemies' hands ; surely he will cause the enemy to treat you well." And then, declaring his willingness to part with his dearest relations, he said, " This is the practice of religion, Sirs ; this is a practical part of religion, to make use of it when we come to the strait : this is a lesson of practical divinity."

When the physician came in, he said, " Is my pulse weak, Doctor ?" *Ans.* " Yes ; but I have seen it as weak." Then he said, " Doctor, as to this piece of work you are near an end with it. I wish you may lay it to heart ; it will come to your door also : and it is a business of great moment, to die like a Christian ; and it is a rarity. Christ himself has told us, that ' there are but few that shall be saved,' even among them who are called outwardly. I wish the Lord himself may show you kindness. The greatest kindness I am now capable to show you, is to commend serious religion to you. There is a reality in religion, Doctor ; but this is an age that hath lost the sense of it. ' He has not said to the house of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.' Atheists will see one day, whether it be so or not."

" I bless God, I was educated by godly parents, in the principles of the church of Scotland. I bless him, that, when I came to riper years, I did, on mature deliberation, make them my choice : I bless the Lord, I have been helped ever since to adhere to them without wavering : I bless him, I have seen, that holiness yields peace and comfort in prosperity and adversity. What should I seek more, or desire more to give evidence of the reality of it ? Therefore, ' I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; because it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.' I am so far from altering my thoughts of religion, by reason of the present contempt thrown on it, and opposition made to it, that this endears it the more to me.

" As to the simplicity of gospel-worship, many must have gaudy pomp now a-days in worship ; it is an evidence of the decay of religion : for when people want the power and spirituality of it, they must have something to please the carnal heart. This is my sense of it ; and it is ' the words of truth and soberness ;' and I speak as being shortly to appear in judgment ; and hope to ' give an account of this with joy,' as a part of the testimony of Jesus."

" Well, Doctor, the Lord be with you, and persuade you to be in earnest. I return you thanks for your diligence. Is my pulse low ?" *Ans.* " Yes." He replied, " I am very well pleased. I would have been content to have been away long ere now. I found my spirits failing. It is but a few strokes more, and ' victory, victory for evermore, through the Captain of our salvation.' "

After a pause, he said, " Every one that is in Christ Jesus must be a new creature ; he must have union with Christ, and have a new nature : that is the ground-work of religion. The Christian religion is little understood by the most part of us——

" O the gospel of Christ ! how purely was it preached in this place, when I was at the university ; though I found not the sweetness in it at the time when I heard others preach on these subjects, I found it since : and it has fallen on me like showers on the mown grass. Verily there is a reality in religion : few have the lively impressions of it.

" Now, get acquaintance with God, the little acquaintance I have had with God, within these two days, has been better than ten thousand times the pains I have all my life been at about religion. It is good to have him

to go to, when we are turning our 'face to the wall: He is known for a refuge in the palaces of Zion, a very present help in trouble.'

"O there is a strange hardness in the heart of man! I believe there are few men come to age, but, when they see others dying, have a conviction that they must die, and yet are not duly affected with it. It is like one rising from the dead, what they meet with. 'But they have Moses and the prophets; if they will not hear them, neither would they hear, though one should rise from the dead.' We must have an ear from God before we can hear. 'Ye hear not my words,' says Christ, 'because ye are not of God.' However, whether people will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is our duty, whom the Lord has employed to preach his Gospel, to speak his word. And when we are dead and rotten, what we speak of his word, in the name of the Lord, will take hold of them.

"We must have patience to wait till he come; 'Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; and till he come, the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back,' says the Lord, 'my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' To point once heaven-ward, and then draw back, is a dangerous thing.

"We are foolish creatures, we would have all the trial at our disposal, and limit the Lord as to the circumstances of our trial. Why should I complain of a little trouble in lying on the bed? Blessed be God, there is an everlasting rest. Yea, Christ hath perfumed a bed of languishing, and a grave; he has unstinged death.'

To some, at another time, he said, "Enemies in this place will be insulting over me; I am not afraid of that: but that which fills me with fears, is the misimprovement of the gospel in St Andrews; St Andrews has sinned against as clear gospel light, as ever shone in the isle of Britain. I remember, when I was at the college, O how much of God was there in the preached Gospel! I had my part in the misimprovement of it."

Afterwards, to his children, he said, "My children, I have nothing to say to you, but be ye seekers of God, 'fulfil my joy.' Ah that I was so long in beginning to seek God! and yet I was touched with convictions that God was seeking me, ere I arrived at the years of some of you."

To his eldest child he said, "Ay Margaret, you seem sometimes to have convictions; beware of them, they are the most dangerous things that ever you meddled with; for if you seek not God, each of them is God's messenger; and if you despise God's messenger, he will be avenged on you. My dear, seek the Lord, and be your mother's comfort.

In the afternoon, to a gentlewoman he said, "Madam, I wait for the supplies of the spirit of the Lord Jesus, whereby I may be able to finish my course with joy. I began a text at Ceres, being my farewell sermon, and " smiling, said, "I failed in it, I went not through with it. When I came to St Andrews, I began where I left off at Ceres, 'I go bound to Jerusalem,' &c. Acts xx. 22, 23. The point I handled was, 'Ministers may have a clear call to work in a place, even where they have the certain prospect of difficulties, and severe trials; which I experienced here. I was very clear respecting God's calling me hither, come of it what will, whether I signify any thing or not. What would befall me I did not know; I had a very dark prospect, especially from this place, that had so much despised gospel light; and that, when he was taking away his servants here, it made me tremble to think that wrath was coming, and that I could do nothing to

keep it off; I can signify nothing. The Lord help me, I wish for Jerusalem's peace and joy.

"I have nothing to do with my life, but yet to husband it, that I may lay it out for my God. What had I been, if the grace of God had not been revealed in the gospel! He has 'brought life and immortality to light.'" One said, "Keep your hold to the last; Satan is busy." He answered, "I have had trial of it already. O! sober, sober religion is necessary. I was often defrauding the Lord of his glory, but, blessed be his name, he made me restore it again with shame, and to cry, 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' I was always afraid in public on that account."

He caused them to read one of Mr Rutherford's letters, and afterwards said, "That is a book I would recommend to you all; there is more practical religion in that letter (viz. to Mr John Mein, 139th letter) than in a book of large volumes."

To a minister that came in, he said, "I am lying waiting for the salvation of God;" who said, "Remember what I spoke to you respecting Mr Anderson, how gracious the Lord had been to him, taking him away before these heart-breaking providences that have since fallen out." He replied, "I know there is a better end of it; the cause that is down will not be kept down; I said it, I'll venture my soul on it: 'Say to Zion, thy God reigneth.' Kings and ministers of state, that build their state on the ruins of Zion, they and their buildings shall be ruined and perish, and their memorial with them." One said, "If the Lord would spare you, it would be a mercy to the place: the apostle says, 'to abide in the flesh is more needful for you;'" he answered, "What can a poor wretch signify? I'll tell you, brother, what I have long thought, I am no prophet, I pretend to know nothing but what the word of God leads to, my thoughts of taking off the servants of God at this time, are, I fear it is coming to that, that there is no stop to be put to the overflowing scourge; there is like to be a general overflowing consumption spreading over, not only this, but all the reformed churches. Sovereignty I will not limit."

Afterwards one was showing the difficulty we would have, while in the body, with indwelling corruption, he answered, "I often find it; but the Lord has relieved me: I found, this same night, even after the Lord gave me relief, I found indwelling sin showing a great deal of strength." One said, "You know, while you are in the body, that will not be quite taken away; a perfect separation from it we are not to expect here." He added, "This 'we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.' This has been made a comfortable word to me this last night."

After a little interruption, he said, "In the day when I was in my distress, and brought to the foot of mount 'Sinai, the mount that might not be touched,' (it was a sensible thing, but by divine appointment it might not be touched,) and when I came to the blackness and darkness, and heard the crashing of thunder, &c. I was standing trembling, wishing I had never been.—While I was waiting for my sentence, he brought me 'to mount Zion, and to the blood of sprinkling,' &c. That view gave my mind rest."

To the apothecary he said, "The Lord is upholding me. The Lord show you mercy; study religion in the beginning of your years; remember, if you come to be handled as I am, without it you can have no comfort: I give you this as a solemn warning, if you come to be hardened by the

frequent view of persons in my circumstances, you may come to be hardened for ever, and your conscience never be sensible more."

To three ministers in the place he said, "My dear brethren, ye are all there that are in the town, except my dear colleague, and I have sent for him. Dear brethren, it is not from any confidence in myself, but out of a sincere love to you, and from what I myself have felt, that for your encouragement I presume to say, when the Lord helped me to diligence in studying and meditating, I found him then remarkably shining upon me, and testifying his approbation of a sincere mind: 'There is nothing to be had with a slack hand.'"

Then to one of them lately entered into the ministry he said, "Your entry into the ministry is like to fall in an evil day: there is one thing for your encouragement, you have a call. The times will make hard work to you in this place; but that which makes your work the harder is, this people's being hardened under a long course of pure gospel ordinances. However, be faithful, and God will strengthen his own work. I will not say, you will get things brought to what you would have; but I'll tell you, I have one thought, and I abide by it: if ministers ply their work, they cannot, it is true, bring persons to the Lord; but they may make their consciences, whether they will or not, speak for the Lord."

Then, continuing his discourse to the ministers, he said, "Now, brethren, give diligence: for the Lord's sake, ply your work, 'hold fast what ye have.' I must have a word to my brethren: it is on my heart, I am young, but I am near the end of my life, and that makes me old. It becomes me to take advice from you. However, it is only to exhort to diligence in the common salvation. I repent I did not more, but I have peace in it, that what I did, I did in sincerity: he accepts of the mite. It was the delight of my heart to preach the Gospel, and it makes me sometimes neglect a frail body. I ever thought, if I could contribute to the saving of a soul, it would be a star, a crown, and a glorious crown. I know this was the thing I aimed at; I desired to decrease, that the Bridegroom might increase, and to be nothing, that he might be all; and I rejoice in his greatness." When one said, "Such great attainments might be comfortable to him now," he replied, "I lay no stress on them; the thing I rejoice in is, that his grace enabled me to this. Well brethren, this is encouragement to you to try and go farther. Alas! I have gone no length, but I would fain have gone farther; 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich.' Much study, much prayer, temptations also, and distinct deliverance from temptations, are useful helps. I was fond enough of books, but I must say in the course of my ministry, what the Lord let me see of my evil heart, and what was necessary against it, was more useful to me than all my books." One said, "that was to believe, and therefore to speak." He replied, "The Lord help me to honour him; I desire no more but to honour him here and hereafter. O that I had the tongues of men and angels to praise him! I hope—I hope, in a little, to get will to answer duty, and skill and ability to answer will. O to be helped so, and to fear always!" One said, "Blessed is he that feareth always, and even under manifestations and discoveries of God: 'He that stands, let him take heed lest he fall.'" He said, "Sobriety, sobriety would fall in a little, if he withdraw; but do not stumble, Sirs, though I should be shaken, the foundations stand sure."

When advised to lie quiet a little, he said, "On what should a man be-

stow his last breath, but in commending the Lord Jesus Christ, God clothed in our nature, dying for our sins? ‘It pleased the Lord to bruise him,’” &c. One said, “The Lord hath said, ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;’ and pressed him to be tender of his body.” He answered, “O but my heart is full!” And then, desiring a minister to pray, he said, “Pray that God may have pity on a weak thing, that is not able to bear much in the conflict.”

After prayer, when the ministers were retiring, he said, “Well, my brethren, remember me. I desire to be thankful for what I have. I do not desire to want you long.”

Thereafter to a minister’s wife, he said, “I recommend to you the fear of the Lord; I know you have a husband to direct you; I know you are the seed of the righteous; but neither of these will avail. Make it your business to grow in practical acquaintance with him, and encourage yourself in the Lord; I fear the time is coming, that it shall be said, ‘Blessed are the breasts that gave no suck, and the womb that never bare.’ I fear heavy trials are hastening on.”

To two ministers who came from the country to visit him, he said, “Brethren, I’ll only say this, we have need to take care, with the great apostle, ‘lest when we preach Christ to others, we be cast-aways,’—if it is so, we have need to fear; happy is the man that fears always. Be diligent in preaching the gospel. I presume, in the case I am in, to suggest this advice, that it may not only be your care to be diligent in composing sermons, but, above all, examine your own hearts, and make use of what discoveries you get there, to enable you to dive into consciences, to awaken hypocrites, and to separate the precious from the vile; and to do it with that accuracy and caution, as not to ‘make sad the hearts of those God has made glad.’ This is the great point in religion, and in the management of your ministry, that you may obtain the testimony of the great Shepherd, when he shall appear. Now, it is probable I may not be far from the conclusion of my work. As to the work of the ministry, it was my deliberate choice; were my days lengthened out much more, and days as troublesome as they are like to be, I would rather be a contemned minister of God, than the greatest prince on earth. I preached the gospel of Christ with pleasure, and I loved it; for my own soul’s salvation depended upon it; and since I lay down, I have not changed my thoughts about it. I commend it to you all, to make it your business to double your diligence; there may be hard conflicts. You have a prospect of difficulties between you and the grave; we are all good untried: but we have need to have ‘on the whole armour of God,’ to watch and be sober.”

One of them said, “I would gladly hear the professor’s mind of the oath.” He answered, “As to the matter of the oath, ‘let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind.’ As those who are clear should guard against every thing that may endanger the peace of this church; so likewise others who are not clear, cannot get over difficulties, and cannot in conscience and duty comply; they are bound in conscience, not only to abstain from separating, but laboriously to convince their people, that it strikes at the root of church communion. If ministers go on in separating measures, the result of it will be, people will be taken up with the public, and forget private religion. Whoever they are that do so, they will have an accession to this. We shall have people running about seeking to have their ears gratified, that love not the power of godliness; we will get a public religion in

the room of real godliness. I love their persons that differ from me, and value what I see of God in them ; but I am ' to call no man master but Christ.'

" With respect to the difference that is like to ensue among ministers, with the greatest earnestness I say, my dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, if difference fall in, there must be condescendence, forbearance, and tenderness. Whatever apprehensions I have of the consequence of some ministers not acting conscientiously, and preaching in such a strain as may do hurt, yet I would speak tenderly, and act tenderly towards them ; and let there be much of the forbearance and meekness that is in Jesus ; follow peace, peace is worth much ; wounding our church among her enemies is sad. I would not have a hand in wounding the church of Scotland for a world : wounding her at this day is stabbing her under the fifth rib. These things are oppressing to me now, upon the view of eternity : for, ' let my right hand forget her cunning, if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy.' For, my brethren, for her peace and constitution I'll pray. The great evil that is like in this day to be our bane, nay, ruin and undoing, is, that there is a coldness and indifference that has crept in : a want of tenderness in the course of our walk, that gives a great advantage to our enemies ; we do not maintain the testimony of God in an humble tender way, in such a day as this, when many are forsaking God. It seems to be a principle now with many, how far they may go and not be ruined ; that is, to go to the brink of destruction ; but the Christian rule is, to stand at a distance. Now the Lord help you. Pray that I may be helped to honour God in life and death ; there is much reason to bless him. O to bear it out, and stand the trial thankfully ! O what ground of thankfulness have I !"

To his successor in the parish from which he was transported, he said, " I have this to say, as to my congregation, the people were my choice ; with much peace and pleasure I preached as I could, though not as I should, the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; though in all things I acknowledged myself to have sinned exceedingly before the Lord, yet I have peace that I aimed with concern at leading them to the Lord Jesus : and other foundation can no man lay : I hope you will build on that same foundation, as you will in that way save your own soul, so it is the way to save them that hear you. From experience I can say, that pursuing this sincerely, is the way to salvation. Signify to them, that, if it please the Lord to take me away, I die rejoicing in the faith and profession of what I often preached to them under a low state of body ; and without this I could have no relief. I would have my people understand, that that Gospel which I recommend to them, if it is not received, will be a witness against them." His successor said, " I am persuaded you have seals to your ministry in that parish." He answered, " We are like our Master, ' set for the fall and rising again of many.' Though we can reach no more, if we are faithful, they ' shall know that a prophet has been among them.'"

To one that came in to him, he said, " Learn to die. It is rare to die as a Christian : the most part think there is nothing more to do, but to lay down their heads and die : this is even as one would cover his face, and leap over a rock into the sea."

To a gentlewoman he said, " I may cry shame on me, and woe is me, that began not sooner, and ran not faster ; for the Lord's way is as silver tried. We should never, in matters of eternal moment, choose a way that we will repent of again." I will not detain you, you will have your uncle,

he will be a good friend to you : follow his advice ; and follow the example of such persons as he. In a word, follow the example of Jesus Christ, and be conversant with the word ; be careful, in not only reading the word, you may soon weary of that, but cry for the Spirit of the Lord, to quicken it, and then you will be with it as the child that cannot live without the breasts. Be diligent in attending the ordinances. The Lord bless you. As for me, for any thing I see, I am dying ; but I die, I bless his name, in the way that I have hitherto chosen, deliberately, and I have no ground to complain. Commend me to all friends. Carry this commission along with you ; what I say to one, I say to all, Seek the Lord. And all I have to seek is, that I may stand fast."

To a private Christian he said, " Seek the Lord, and be in earnest about religion : content not yourself with the form of it ; a mere profession will not serve the purpose ; this will be but the shell without the kernel ; but they that are sincere shall inherit the crown. Let not the scorn and contempt that is cast on religion, cause you to give up with it. It is not in vain to seek the Lord ; you have found it. The Scriptures of truth are a contemned book by men ; but they are able to make you wise unto salvation ; beware of quarrelling with them, and throwing them by as a useless book ; but converse with them, and you will find your account in them. All the books of the world could not have stood me in that stead, that since yesterday they have been to me. Choose good company ; beware of ill company, keep at a distance from it : seek that God may guide you into religious company, and improve it ; persons by whom you may learn something, and that without learning any thing which may be hurtful. You have a sad set of gentry round about here ; take heed ye be not drawn aside by them. This is a friend's advice, that is meet for me, in my circumstances, especially to give, and meet for you to receive."

After a little pause, he said, " I will tell you one difference there is this day between my case and the case of many in the world ; the course I have followed, though feebly, has been at least to join with them that are on God's side. Now it is come to a push, and I have peace ; I always wish to have God for my God, and the ' heritage of his chosen.' But they that walk contrary to God, and forsake him, I have seen them frequently, when they were come to a strait, cry then, ' O shame upon the way I have been following.' "

In the night-time, to some present he said, " Do you observe this growing weakness of my eyes ? " They answered, " No. " He replied, " Yea, but I know it is so ; now that is a prognostic of a change. If he shut my eyes, he will open my eyes, no more to behold vanity ; but I shall behold him in righteousness, and when I awake I shall be satisfied with his likeness. "

Afterwards he said, " If this be the day of the ending of my conflict, I would desire even humbly to seek of the Lord, that he would of his great mercy condescend to be tender to one that loves his appearance ; that as he has dealt wonderfully and condescendingly with me, so he may even deal tenderly to the end, in loosing the frame of my tabernacle, and that I may be helped to honour God by a composed resignation of my spirit into his hand. O religion ! and the glory of it, in this degenerate age, has been much on my heart ; and he has said, ' Them that honour me, I will honour.' I was willing, through his grace, to have borne reproach ; if my adversary had written a book, I would have taken and bound it as a glory. "

Finding some sweat on his face, he said, " I fancy that is an indication of a greater change. I can compose myself, I bless his name. I wot not

how it comes to pass, that a body that has met with so much of God, should be so unthankful as in the least to doubt him about the rest. O what an 'evil heart of unbelief,' cursed unbelief, and cursed self, have I ! O how has God honoured me ! O that I should yet have such an enemy in my bosom as an evil heart ! ”

He caused them to read 1 Thes. i. 4, and chap. v. And when one said, “ Sir, I think you need to take the night's rest,” he answered, “ I have no need of any rest, were it not to put me in case to 'finish my course with joy.' Lo, what the power of Christ's death, and the efficacy of his resurrection are ! And now I find the advantage of one at the 'right hand of God, who is able to save to the uttermost ;' and that is the sight I long for ; he will but shut my eyes, and open them in glory ! O it is a great matter, Sirs, to believe ; yet we have strong grounds to believe, only we have 'evil hearts of unbelief.' This I dare say, to have my soul entirely submissive to God, and all things, even every high imagination and thought, made subject, is my sincere desire ; but I will get that done shortly. Then never will there be a reluctant thought, never an estranged thought more from God : ' Now it does not appear what we shall be ; we shall be like him when he appears ; for we shall see him as he is.' ”

To one that alleged he was faint, he said, “ I am not faintish, I am composed, I am refreshed, I am not drunk with wine, and yet I am refreshed with wine, with the spiced wine ; O there is a sweet calm in my soul ! And ' my desires are towards him, and the remembrance of his name.' Remember him ! why should I not remember him that remembered me, in my low condition ? ' He passed by, and said, Live ;' and when he says, he commands, he gives rest.”

After the reading of the foresaid Scripture, he caused them to read 2 Cor. i. 1—11, and after the 9th and 10th verses were read, he said, “ Now there it is all ; God has delivered and filled me with peace, when I was under that heavy damp ; and I hope that he will deliver, even from that which I feared in death, and let me find that I have gotten the victory, and that the God of peace will bruise Satan shortly under my feet, and he will get up no more ; and I will get the victory over the cunning world, the deceitful heart. O ! many a weary day I have had with my unbelief. If I had had faith to believe things not seen, if I had had faith equal to the convictions I had in my soul, that my happiness lay not in things seen or temporal, but eternal ; if I had had faith's abiding impressions, realizing these things, I would not have known how to remain out of heaven a moment.”

A little thereafter he said, “ As I preached the gospel in my life, so I desire to die preaching it ; and though I live not to a suffering time, I may get in among the witnesses. Sirs, I will be a witness against St Andrews, I will be a witness against the professors that are come about me, if they follow not the Lord.”

When desired to lie quiet, and take sleep, he answered the people, “ I am going to 'sleep not day nor night, but cry, Holy, holy, holy !' ' They that wait on the Lord shall mount up as with eagles' wings.' ”

Then he said, “ Find ye any alteration as to my coldness ? The only reason why I ask is, I would not lose my time.”

“ Ah ! poor uncomely I, that think shame to come in among that fair company,” One said, “ You will be as fair as the rest.” He said “ Blessings to his name for composure. I cannot get my heart in a right tune, as I would have it, but in a little I will get it so.”

After he had lain quiet a little, one said, "You have slept none." He answered, "No, I had much work, but, blessed be God, pleasant work."

Afterwards, when his wife asked how he was, he answered, "My dear, I am longing for the salvation of my God, and hastening to it." Then seeing her very sad, he said, "My dear, encourage yourself; here is a body going to dust, and a soul going to heaven, where I hope you are to come."

September 19. About five in the morning, when he was desired to lie quiet, and try if he could rest, he answered, "No, no, should I lie here altogether useless? should not I spend the last portion of my strength to show forth his glory?" He held up his hands, and said, (his hands and legs were greatly swelled,) "Lame hands, and lame legs, but see, a lame man leaping and rejoicing!"

Speaking of his children to his wife, he said, "They are all a devoted thing to the Lord; and I can say, sometimes, when they were baptized, that the Lord helped me to devote them to him, and bade me bring the rest, and he would accept of them."

Afterwards, finding some disorder in his body, he said, "This is just one of the forerunners of the change, the great change." One said, "Blessed be the Lord, that he is providing you with relief." He replied, "His word is a good word; and O he has been condescending, astonishingly condescending! And I am even made to say, 'Why are his chariot wheels so long a-coming?' When shall I be admitted to see the glory of the higher house, and, instead of that cloudy light of a created sun, to see that clear and perfect glory, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne?"

After a while's silence, in the forenoon, finding himself very low, he took farewell of his wife and children, saluting them all one by one, and spoke particularly to each of them. Then he said, "A kind and affectionate wife you have been to me; the Lord bless you, and he shall bless you."

To a minister who came in, he said, "Your servant, brother. I am at a trying work; I am parting with my wife and children. Resolve on that, I bless his name, though I have had one of the best of wives, yet she is no more mine, but the Lord's.

Then to his children he said, "Now you are fatherless; your father is to be taken from you—but seek God. And now I had you from the Lord, and I give you to him. Now I leave you upon him; you are no more mine."

To his son he said, "*God bless the lad*, and let my name be named upon him. But, O what is my name! Let *the name of the Lord* be named upon him. I do not say, keep up my name; but O that you may be honoured to tell the generation following, how good God is, and to hand down the testimony! And O that ye may all be the Lord's.

After that, he spoke to his servants, and said, "As for you, my servants, that have been in my family, my dear friends, make religion your main business, and mind that above all things. I charge all my servants in my house, beware of graceless masters, avoid them, as what may turn to your destruction; seek to be with them that fear the Lord."

Then he said, "I will not bring up an ill report on religion; nay, I cannot but give a testimony to it: 'tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed.' God has shed abroad his love in my heart; and I am waiting for his salvation. Here is a demonstration of the reality of religion, that I, a poor, weak, timorous man, once as much afraid of death as any, I, that have been

many years under the terrors of death, come now, in the mercy of God, and by the power of his grace, composedly, and with joy, to look death in the face. I have seen it in its paleness, and all the circumstances of horror attending it; I dare look it in the face in its most ghastly shape, and hope within a little to have the victory. Then he said, I hope he will deal tenderly; but pray for me, that my 'faith fail not.' I loved to live preaching Christ, and love to die preaching Christ."

To some ministers, that were come in, he said, "My brethren, I have been taking farewell of wife and children; I have been giving them up to God, from whom I received them: I am upon the wing of eternity; but glory to God, 'I know in whom I have believed.'"

Then he said, "Dear brethren, will you begin and speak a word to one who longs to hear of Christ; O I love to hear the gospel, I love to preach it, it is a joyful sound, a sweet sound; I love to hear of his name; 'his name is as ointment poured forth;' the efficacy lies here, they are his ordinances, his institutions, and he has promised to bless them; that makes me desire them. The gospel as dispensed, is the 'ministration of the Spirit.' I have need of grace, that I may be helped to stand to it to the last, and in the last conflict to honour him." One said, "God has been gracious to you hitherto; and you know, he is always the same, he is the same to those that belong to him: there is one good word, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'" He answered, "Blessed be his name, that he will stand by me. O to have him shut my eyes himself, and then to open them, that I may behold him in his own light."

Afterwards he said, "Well, Sirs, what shall we say of the Lord Christ? 'He is altogether lovely.' Religion is a mystery; but I was looking through the promises this night, and observing how to provide against the last conflict: I was astonished, and at a stand, when I saw the sweet accomplishment of them: every promise of the word of God is sweet; they are sure promises. O Sirs, study the word, observe the accomplishment of it; it was the thing I loved all my days, and it is sweet to the last. O the accomplishment of the word is worthy to be observed, and especially when I was looking this same night to what he has already fulfilled to me."

To a minister he said, "Now, Sir, though I will not limit the Lord as to time, I am expecting the onset from the last enemy; and I know not but I may get my enemies about me ere then."

Then exhorting some to think on death, he said, "To remember death is a profitable thing: to remember death is not to go to church-yards and visit tombs; but it lies in this,—to be habitually under the impression of death in its rise and cause, in its present state and relation to both covenants; the various issues and consequences of it, and the way of delivery from it, and all the circumstances attending it."

Then, as to his spiritual enemies, he said, "But I think I am now almost out of their hand." One said, "That is a great victory." He answered, "I dare not speak of victory; but he holds me up, though I cannot keep pace: I am afraid to speak, lest a cursed enemy, namely, self, lie at the door to catch; for when I had the greatest advantages, I have felt corruption stirring, and making no small work, inclining me to spoil my Lord of his glory." One said, "We shall neither under mercies nor afflictions be free of this trial." He said, "O strange, that when death has so long been kept in view, that it should be so!" One said, "You have reason to count that a victory, that the Lord has helped you over your late

fears ; you know what a dread you was under on Wednesday, and what a sweet relief you got." He answered, " I desire to bless his name for it ; but I should yet be under as great a dread if he should withdraw : holy fear, caution, and jealousy, is still needful."

After that, to the ministers, he said, " Brethren, you are there : in case I should be surprised, I take this opportunity to acknowledge your tenderness to me, that I am most unworthy of it in many respects. I can say I desired to live in love with you ; and I bless God there was harmony amongst us. The Lord bless you and your labours ; the Lord himself multiply spiritual blessings on you and your families, support you against discouragements ; and the Lord in mercy look on the rising generation ; the Lord keep his hands about the seminaries in this place ; God look with pity on them." Then to one he said, " My dear brother, who has been my comfort in affliction, stand your ground ; quit yourself like a man ; be strong. Now, Sir, now my dear friend, I shall only say, as I wish you the blessing of God on your family, so I desire that you will even show kindness to the dead, in sympathy and kindness to my dear wife and children : I recommend her to your care ; she has been the friend of my bosom, the wife of my youth, a faithful friend." And turning to all the ministers present, " O ! Sirs, check my poor babies, if ye see any thing in them disorderly : I have lent and devoted them to the Lord. Last spring the Lord has made proof of it, and has taken me at my word.* O ! Sirs, it is an evidence of the decay of religion, that sympathy and love among the saints are decayed. O that the Spirit were poured out from on high !" Then he said, " Pray, Sirs, pray for grace : I would have the praise of the victory to him."

Afterwards he said, " Patience must have its perfect work : I will wait for it ; my soul longs more than they that wait for the morning. Sweet Lord Jesus, make haste, ' until the day break, and the shadows flee away.'" Then to a minister he said, " Pray a word for patience to me to stand this last trial."

Thereafter, at his desire, a long paper was read over to him, which he had dictated some days before, containing a testimony to religion, and advice to his family ; which being read, he acknowledged, before several witnesses, that he had dictated the same ; and desired, that these, as his words, might be attested by them : the tenor whereof follows :

" Having, in another paper apart, made such a disposition of my worldly concerns as I thought most expedient for my family, I did think myself bound moreover, by this present testament, and latter will, to declare my sentiments and sense as to religion ; but hitherto, through the mercy of God, in the full and composed exercise of any reason and judgment that God has given, though otherwise very frail in body. And this I am the rather inclined to do, as a testimony against the growing apostasy of the day we live in, and in expression of my earnest concern to have all with whom I have any influence or interest to adhere to the truth and way of God, in opposition to that general inclination to apostasy, in principle and practice, that prevails this day.

" In the first place, then, I do ingenuously acknowledge, that I came into the world a defiled, polluted branch of apostate Adam, under the guilt of his sin, tainted with the pollution of sin, derived from him, having a heart full of alienation from, and an enmity against God ; in a word, ' a

* By this he meant the death of his son George

child of wrath, and heir of hell.' And long did I follow the bent of this corrupt nature, going on, notwithstanding reclaiming means of all sorts, from evil to worse, though mercifully restrained from those more open scandals, that bring reproach before the world : in a word, I had ruined myself, and could do nothing for my own recovery ; and must have been everlastingly ruined in this case, if the Lord, in tender mercy, had not looked upon me.

"I must, on the other hand, (and the Lord knows I do it with much cheerfulness of heart,) bless the Lord, who cast my lot in a land where the gospel of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, is clearly, plainly, and purely revealed and preached, wherein the pure ordinances of God's worship, without the mixture of men's inventions, have, through the mercy of God, been kept up, and the beautiful order of his house maintained, according to the rule of his word. I bless the Lord that he so ordered it, that I was born in a religious family, of godly parents, and that I had this to say, that God was my father's God, and that I had been by them earnestly and seriously devoted to him. And whereas I early subjected myself to other lords, in my childhood and youth, I bless and adore the Lord, that by his word and Spirit, he ceased not to be a reprover, reclaimer ; and to strive with me, until, by a day of his power, he made me cheerfully give up with those abominations, and return to the God of my fathers. Long did I struggle against the Lord's work ; but praises to free grace, he proved stronger than I, and overcame me, and I rejoice in his strength.

"I bless the Lord, though, by many provocations of all sorts, I have given him just ground to abandon me quite, yet he has not so done ; nay, even when I was as a beast before him, he held me by the hand, and left me not to run away. O astonishing sovereignty of grace ! I bless the Lord, that when I stood trembling under the terrors of God's law, he seasonably saved me from despair, by some discovery of the blessed way of salvation for self-destroyed sinners, through a slain Saviour ; even such a discovery as made me resolve to part with all, that I might have the field, Christ the treasure hid in it, and pearl of great price. There is nothing I dread so much as a mistake in this matter : it is Christ only that will answer me and my case ; and without him I am undone : on the efficacy of his sufferings, the power of his resurrection, and of his whole mediation, as revealed in the gospel, do I build all my hope.

"I bless the Lord that he ever honoured such a sinful unworthy worm to preach the glorious gospel of his Son. I confess I have but ill managed this glorious trust ; and my manifold corruptions made me a sinner in all I did exceedingly ; yet, so far as I do know my own heart, it was the life of my life ' to preach Christ crucified,' and deal with consciences about accepting of him ; nor durst I deal coldly, or indifferently, in a matter on which I knew my own and hearers' salvation to eternity depended. Herein this day I have peace, and I know that in this matter I shall never have ground of regret. I must bear my honourable Master that testimony, that he never bid me go any part of my warfare upon my own charges ; if I was straitened, it was in my own bowels ; as to him, I always found, that to spend and have in his service, was the best thrift ; when I was helped freely to give what freely I had received, I never wanted then seed for sowing, and bread for the eater, and I hope sometimes a blessing.

"I bless God that he has cast the lot of an insignificant worm among those to whom his weak labours were not unacceptable ; and I look upon it as

a high privilege to have the countenance of the saints, ‘the excellent ones of the earth;’ I have desired to live with them here, and desire to have my portion with them eternally hereafter. I have peace this day, that through his merciful hand, I have been kept from making any worldly interest the main design; it is to his grace only I owe this, as every thing else.

“I bless the Lord that I have been happily visited in the several places wherein I lived, with kind, affectionate, useful fathers and brethren to me, with whom I have lived with much delight and satisfaction, and for whom I bless the Lord heartily.

“In a word, I desire to join my insignificant testimony to that of the glorious cloud of witnesses; and particularly I do attest, as my fixed persuasion, that Christ only has the ‘words of eternal life;’ that the ‘gospel only has brought life and immortality to light;’ that this blessed revelation is able ‘to make wise to salvation every one that believeth.’ I must bear testimony, that the way of holiness is the way of peace, and the way of pleasantness; and the gospel-ordinances, in their native simplicity and purity, are blessed and effectual means of communion and ‘fellowship with the Father and with the Son.’

“I see a generation, that has long ago lost any thing of the power of religion some of them once seemed to have, hastening fast to an utter rejection of the purity of gospel ordinances, and strongly inclined to substitute in their room that dead carcass of forms, ceremonies, and superstitions, which England, at her reformation, regarding political considerations more than the rule of church-reformation, retained, to the unspeakable prejudice of souls, and to the endangering, one day or other, the whole of the Christian religion there; it being visible, that, among those who adhere to them, the power of religion is still wearing lower and lower; and nothing could induce this generation to the change, but their utter ignorance of the power of religion; and something men must have. It is obvious, the change is not of God; the lives of the zealots for it demonstrate this, with the opposition made by them unto serious godliness, and the encouragement given unto profane persons, if they will but join with them in this party-design. In a word, my sense of it is, that it flows from the want of sense of the spirituality that God requires in his worship, and is likely to issue in the loss of all religion. Such as now cavil at the purity and simplicity of religion, and put forms in its room, are likely, ere long, as we have seen instances, to set the form aside too.

“In a word, all in God’s way, in his word, is glorious, honourable, and like himself, he needs none of our testimonies; but it is the least that we can do, to signify our good will to have his praises celebrated; and I, being so many ways obliged, take this solemn occasion to acknowledge, before I leave the world, these among the innumerable other obligations; and desire to bequeath this as my best legacy to my family, even my serious and solemn advice, to make choice of God for their God: he has been my father’s God, the God both of my wife’s predecessors and mine: he has been, we hope, our God; and I recommend him to my children for their God; solemnly charging them, as all of them will be answerable in the great day, to make it their first care to seek after peace with God, and reconciliation through Christ crucified; and being reconciled, make it their perpetual study to please him in all things. I beseech them, with all the bowels of a father, as they love their souls, rest not satisfied short of saving acquaintance with him, wait diligently upon the means of grace, and attend the worship

of God in all duties, especially secret, and family likewise, and carefully attend public ordinances; beware of contenting yourselves with the mere form of these duties, but cry to the Lord for communion with him in them, and the outpouring of his Spirit, whereby you may be enabled to worship God, who is a spirit, in spirit. It is my charge to you, and that which I am above all things relating to you concerned in, that ye follow God; follow him early, follow him fully, without turning aside to the right or left hand. In this way, I dare promise you blessedness; if ye follow this way, I bless you all, and pray, that he who blesses, and they who are blessed, may bless you all. I have often devoted, as I could, all of you to God: and there is nothing I have so much at heart, as to have this stand, that ye may indeed be the Lord's: and if ye turn aside from this way, then I will have this to be a standing witness against you in the day of the Lord. O that God himself, by his grace, may, in a day of his power, determine your tender hearts to seek him early, and he will be a good portion, and see well to you: 'your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure;' necessities you shall have, and a blessing; though you have not many blood-relations, ye shall not want a friend every where, and that a steady friend. I leave you, my dear family, upon the mercies of God in Christ, and recommend him, and the word of his grace to you, and you to him, and to the word of his grace. Be obedient and comfortable to your mother, as ye would have God's blessing: she deserves this at your hand, and will need that comfort.

"I leave this one advice more to my family, that whereas we have a prospect of divisions, and different apprehensions and practices among ministers and people, particularly about this oath of abjuration, beware of interesting yourselves in that difference, or entertaining prejudices against ministers upon the one hand or the other; there will be faithful ministers on both sides, and on either hand they will act sincerely, according to their light; whoever shall be accessory to the weakening of any of their hands, will find no peace in it, in the close of the day; beware of a religion that is most taken up about public matters. The sum of the gospel is Christ crucified. Seek where this is purely preached; beware of an itching after pulpit-debates. 'Walk humbly with God, fear always.' Keep at a distance from appearances of evil; follow peace, truth, holiness. This, instead of legacies, I leave unto you, as my last will, never to be revoked.

"As for my body, I commit it to the dust, under the care of the Keeper of Israel, expecting and hoping that the quickening Spirit, that is, the Spirit of the Head, which actuates all the members of his mystical body, will in due time quicken my mortal body. And for my spirit, I commend it unto the Lord Jesus Christ; with him I have intrusted it long ago; and I will end it, with Stephen, crying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

"THO. HALYBURTON."

Afterwards, to some present he said, "Professors, I have this to say this day about religion—we have a double call to give a testimony to it; atheism and profaneness are coming in like a flood. We shall all be martyrs. Blessings to his name to get leave to lie on this bed, to testify against profaneness and atheism. But," said he, "it is very painful to be lying here when all is ready, I mean, to be dwelling in this, when there is a habitation, a better house. I am loosed from my enjoyments, my dearest wife and children; I have given up with them, and my heart is disengaged; but I

put them in a good hand ; I have put them in the Lord's hand. I do confess, God has been braying me in a mortar this long time, and I see he has been doing some work ; I was made like a weaned child ; I durst not repine." Then he cried, " O when wilt thou come ? Come, Lord Jesus. I wait for the Lord.

Afterwards, when some people came in to see him, he said, " These fourteen or fifteen years I have been studying the promises ; but I have seen more of the book of God this night than in all that time. O the wisdom that is laid up in the book of God ! that is to be found only there." Then he said, " I know a great deal from a dying man will go for canting and raving : but I bless God he has so kept the little judgment I had, that I have been able to reflect with composure on his dealing with me. I am sober and composed, if ever I was sober. And whether men will forbear, or whether they will hear, this is a testimony. The operations of the Spirit of God are ridiculed in this day : but if we take away the operations and influences of the Spirit of God in religion, I know not what is left. He promised the Spirit to lead us into all truth. O that this generation would awaken, to seek after the quickening influences of the Spirit ! O for a day of the down-pouring of the Spirit from on high, in a work of conversion ! for such a day as that, when the Spirit of God effectually reached our fathers, and brought forth great men, and made others to be conquered by them ! ' The residue of the Spirit is with him.' "

To a minister he said, " I am won now, I say, I am won, brother, longing for the salvation of God, and for the day when I shall see his appearance. But I must keep my post, and good reason, if he send me but fresh supplies, as much as help me, till I come home, that I may not dishonour him, by begging at another's door : I am so proud, I would take all from him, and not beg from other lords. Our Master gives his servants a very honourable allowance."

Then to the physician he said, " Doctor, it is great bravery to face death on a sick-bed. The heathens of old, whenever they turned impatient, ran away to kill themselves, and made an end of themselves, they could not endure it. Is it not more courage, and a nobler spirit, that the Lord allows even the weak, the timorous, the faintish, a power whereby they can lie under sickness and pain, and brave the stoutest enemy, by a patience of spirit ?"

After a pause, he said, " I think we shall lose the very semblance of religion. Our gentry and nobility, if the Lord do not reclaim them, I think, are all like to turn heathens, drunkards, swearers, &c. Among other things, I rejoice in it, that the Lord is taking me away in my younger years, that I will be free of the transgression of the wicked ; and it has many a year grieved my soul to see it."

After a little, he said, " There is a sweet composure on my spirit. The beams of the house are as it were cracking. I am laying down my tabernacle, to build again. O ! to get grace to be faithful to the death : for after we have gone through many things, yet we have need still to wait on God till the last ; for it is ' he that endures to the end that shall be saved.' Am not I a man wonderfully upheld by God under affliction and death ? The death of the saints is made a derision in our day ; but if they laugh at me, I can laugh at them, and I think I have better reason ; let them come to my state, and they dare not ; and ' I will rejoice in my God, and joy in the God of my salvation, though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there

should be no fruit in the vine, and the labour of the olive should fail.' But," said he, "blessed be God, I am provided for : God is a good portion : I want death to complete my happiness."

After a little pause, he said, "I was this day afraid, in the morning, that want of rest might have discomposed me, I would fain have rest for fear of my head. The Lord has been very kind to me, in giving me composure and the exercise of my judgment, after I had a sore distracting trouble in the beginning of my death-bed sickness." Then he said, "But being laid here, I must speak ; it is the last service the Lord Jesus calls for at my hand ; and I owe him so much, that I cannot but commend him. As far as my word will go, I must proclaim it, he is the best Master that ever I saw."

Then to the physician he said, "I fancy my feet are growing cold, doctor ; yea, yea, all the parts of this body are going to ruin. You may," said he, "believe a man venturing on eternity. I am not acting as a fool, but I have weighed eternity this last night. I have looked on death as stripped of all things pleasant to nature ; I have considered the spade and grave, and every circumstance in it that is terrible to nature ; and, under the view of all these, I found that in the way of God, that gave satisfaction, not only a rational satisfaction, but a heart-engaging power attending it, that makes me rejoice." The doctor said, "You speak beyond your strength ; it is a wonder to see you hold out so." He answered, "I cannot bestow my strength better, doctor ; and I owe him much more. I have narrow thoughts ; I am like to be overwhelmed, and I know not where I am, when I think on what I am to be, and what I am to see ; I have long desired, and prayed for it ; blessed be God, I am richly furnished. I had as much the day after my sister died."

To his son he said, "O man, if I had as many sons as there are hairs in your head, I would bestow them all on God. David, these are honest people," (meaning the ministers,) "mind their advice ; the curse of God will overtake you, if you follow it not. Beware of ill company ; read the Bible. I pray you may be an encouragement to your mother."

He was much concerned about his two nephews abroad, on which he dictated a letter for one of them ; which is as follows :

"DEAR NEPHEW,

"The words of your dying uncle, the last letter from him, should have some weight ; and my earnest desire, that it may have weight in order to your eternal salvation, is the reason of my employing some of my last minutes, by a borrowed hand, to commend unto you to make earnest of religion, and not to rest content with a dead, dry, barren profession. I can tell you, since I came to this bed of languishing, I have found a full proof, that religion is a real, useful, noble, and profitable thing. I have been helped, through the mercy of God, during my lying here, to rejoice in the goodness of God, and lie composedly and pleasantly : nothing but religion, nothing, nothing but the power of the grace of God, can have that efficacy, to enable me to do so ; and having found it so serviceable a friend, I could not but commend it to you. It is a day of power only that will engage you effectually, and will prevail with you to engage in earnest. A providence like this may rouse some present afflictions, which will go off in an empty flash again ; but it must be a renewing work of grace that will fix an abiding anchor. The Lord in mercy engage your heart to him, that you may

find how good he is to the soul that seeks him, as I do this day to my joy, and hope to do more fully in a little. I could not but commend the Lord to you, having found so much of his goodness; I never found so much when I was in health and prosperity, as I find now in sickness and languishing: I find he makes all things to be for good to his people; sickness, or health, or diseases, or whatever they be, all is good, and I find all for good. I am longing to be away, and I must break off. If God be pleased to bless this advice from a dying friend, we will meet, and meet comfortably, in the higher house; I mean, if ye comply with the design of the advice. I fear the influence of the place you live in, want of lively ordinances, and the converse of lively Christians, may endanger you. Converse much with the word of God; be much in secret prayer. God can give a good appetite, and a strong stomach, that out of a very sapless piece of nourishment can fetch something that will give strength, and make coarser food subsist and nourish too. However, as soon as you can, seek after lively ordinances; endeavour by all means to cultivate acquaintance with the saints, the ‘excellent ones in the earth,’ that fear God.

“Dear nephew, I remember kindly your wife, and I advise you, in that place where you can scarcely have access to any ordinances, and cannot but be exposed to many disadvantages and dangers in point of religion—I advise you to take the first opportunity of coming out of Babylon, and settling your business where ye may be under lively means of grace. I know you are a child of many prayers, and you were prayed back from the gates of death; and now I wish that you may give evidence that you have been prayed back indeed for mercy to yourself. I shall be glad that this advice from a dying man come to be any way useful to you. The Lord be with your spirit. You cannot expect from any one of my condition, a digested, polished letter; but I speak the words of soberness, and full composure of mind, blessed be God. Let your kindness to the dead appear in your kindness to my dear widow, whom I leave behind, and my six children; show your concern for both.

“THO. HALYBURTON.”

To some present he said, “O Sirs, I dread mightily, that a rational sort of religion is coming in among us; I mean by it, a religion that consists in a bare attendance on outward duties and ordinances, without the power of godliness; and by this means people shall fall into a way of serving God, which is mere deism, having no relation to Christ Jesus, and the Spirit of God.” To his colleague he said, “Dear brother, let not modesty hinder you from laying out your talents that way; God has given you abilities. Well, brother, to encourage you, I must tell you, I must say it, your conversation has been a blessing to me; our mutual communication about the concerns of the Lord was reviving. It was after a sweet night’s communication of this sort, that God relieved me of my grief respecting my son George, and brought me to a sweet submission in the prospect of his approaching death. O! if we could be concerned about God’s interest, he would look well to ours.”

Then he said, “If I had all our brethren present now, I would tell them how much it is upon my heart that they may maintain brotherly love, and beware of division.” One said, “I have observed that that has been many times the greatest trial of the church of Scotland. Alas! the fatal lengths that division came in time of persecution, and not without the in-

fluence of some by their preaching, has brought us to that pass, that we are not like to recover." He said, "O what a care has God of me, that is hiding me from the evil to come! I was willing to stand my post with you, to stand and fall with the church of Scotland; but my master is calling me away. O! I pity, I pity them that stay behind. I am no prophet, I do not pretend to prophecy; but I am persuaded a storm is coming on this church." One said, "I hope, brother, the Lord will not quit his church in Scotland." He answered, "Indeed I hope not; but I much doubt if this generation will be honoured to do God great service, and see good days; I do not much wonder that he has laid me by: but, however, they that 'keep the faith, and fight the good fight,' shall have abundant peace. Well, well, Sirs, the day must break; I hope, I hope the Lord will arise, and the church will be made a wonder; he will say, 'Lo! this people have I formed for myself: he can make a nation to be born at once.'"

Often he said this day, "O how composed am I! what a wonder to be so, while I see the evident symptoms of my dissolution!" and cried often, as in the Song, "'When shall the day break, and the shadows fly away? Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.' I am longing to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, that is far better."

When a minister's son came in, he said, "John, you are going to get another lesson from a dying man; you got one from a dying father, and now another from a second father." This he said because that young man was recommended to his care. Then telling how kind the Lord was to that minister when dying, he said, "I have found much of God's goodness too, I did not think to come near him, but I was desiring and panting after a share of his happiness; and now God has given it me. And now, John, I charge you, trace your father's steps, as ye will be answerable at the great day. O serve the Lord! and for your encouragement, I tell you, John, he is the best of masters: be encouraged to seek God, beware of the vanities of youth; and take heed to your ways according to the word of God. The Lord bless you, and bless your sisters, and make them in their younger years to seek God, and it will be well with you. The reverend old man, your grandfather, your father looked on him as an orphan; be you as a father to him, be always presenting the word of life to him, and have a tender care of him; it is the way to obtain a blessing. Pray for me, for patience to the end, that I may get to praise him. I many times had a mistuned voice; but, which is worse, I had a mistuned heart: but I'll get all right tuned above."

To a minister that came from Edinburgh to visit him, he said, "Come and see your friend in the best case that ever you saw him in, longing for a deliverance, and 'hastening to the coming of the day of God, waiting for the salvation of God,' on a bed of roses, though nature and body say not so, a bed perfumed. And, Sir, I sent for you, I longed to see you, that I might give you encouragement in an evil world to preach the gospel, and stand by Christ, that has been so good to me. This is the best pulpit that ever I was in, I am now laid on this bed for this end, that I may commend my Lord." He answered, "It is a great blessing that he commends himself to you, and I desire to bless him on that account." To which he replied, "Yea, he commended himself first."

September 20. In the morning, when a minister asked how he was, he said, "I am composed, waiting for him." To which he replied, "You

see how kindly he deals with you, he is both antedating in your soul heavenly exercise, and heavenly enjoyments." On which he said, "He is preparing and making me 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.'" The minister said, "He deals so tenderly with you, that he gives you little to do but to praise." He answered, "I have reason to desire the help of all to praise him: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, magnify his holy name.'"

To some entering the room, he said, "Indeed you are all very welcome, Sirs, I am taking a little wine for refreshment, and in a little I'll get my wine fresh and new in his kingdom of glory; I dare scarcely allow my thoughts to run directly upon it, I must look aside, lest I should be overwhelmed. But I cannot sufficiently speak of him who has done wonderful things for me, and has kept me this day in a perfect calm." One said, "You have got, I trust, what your heart can desire, to make you meet for going through the valley of the shadow of death, since Wednesday that you had your own trial." He answered, "'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.' It is but a little, and I shall get that rest, I am getting the earnest of it. It is but a little, and I'll get himself. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright.' O! when will it come, that I may get there, where I'll conceive aright of glory. 'I cannot order my speech now, because of darkness;' but I long to behold it. I have the patience to wait until he come. I have experienced much of his goodness since I lay down in this bed. I have found that 'tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.' And I have found the 'love of God shed abroad in my soul.'" Then turning to his wife, he said "Come away, my dear, and encourage yourself in the expectation, that under the conduct of the same Captain of salvation, you will come hither, and cast yourself and your family upon the Lord; encourage yourself, God liveth; blessed be my Redeemer, the Rock of my strength."

After that, to his son he said, "I am going to die; I am to be a bridegroom to-day, at least I am to be the bride; I am going home to my God, and I hope your God. And be sure that you be with God often; and if ye be often with him, ye will be where I am. My dear, seek God, seek him, and seek him early, and he will be found of you. 'The angel that preserved me, bless the lad.' Remember, David, that I have commended God and his way to you." Then he said, "O! Sirs, if there were a day of the power of God going along, and God taking hold of the hearts of youth. Poor thing, read your book, and be a good scholar yourself, and be sure to seek God, that he may teach you."

Then he said, "Who is like him? O! what he has allowed me this night! I know now the meaning of that word, 'Ask what ye will in my name, and ye shall receive it.' I say, the Lord has even allowed me to be very familiar in every circumstance, and I have thought I was even aiming at it."

Then to his daughter he said, "Come, Margaret, I must again commend to you my God, and his ways. Be an encouragement to your mother. Remember the many exhortations I have given you, and despise them not, and save your own soul; and cry that in a day of his power he may bring you to sound sincerity. You have lost a loving father: it will be God only that can make him up. But God can do more; and indeed we must not compare fathers. Your father and mother have given you

to God ; do not you give yourself unto the devil. In all things aim at pleasing God ; and, my dear, you will never repent it."

After that, he caused his son come to him, and said, "David, keep not near vain persons, any body that will swear, or lie, or speak any thing that is bad, or that will break the Sabbath-day, come not near them ; and pray that God may give you a better memory to remember the sermons, and stay your heart."

Then he said, "O let us exalt his name together ! O glory dwells in Immanuel's land ! I long for the fragrancy of the spiced wine. 'Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples ; for I am sick of love.'" Then he caused a minister to pray.

Afterwards, to a minister that came in, he said, "I am 'come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant ;' I will be among the blessed company that stand by ; I will be with that assembly above, where 'the Lamb in the midst of the throne' has the precedency : and now I wait for his salvation ; glory to him. 'What shall I render to God ? Let us exalt his name together ;' he has done wonderful things for me. I have been many a day afraid how I should get through the valley and shadow of death." One said, "It is a mercy, Sir, the Lord has taken away the fear of death, before death come." He answered, "O there is much in this, he has wrought us for the self-same thing ! Since I was laid down here, the Lord has carried on a work of sanctification deep in my soul, that makes me meet for heaven."

After prayer by some of the ministers, it was asked at him, "Find you any more ease ?" He answered, "Yea, I found ease in the time of prayer." Then he said, "I long to launch out in his praise, it is an ocean. If I come not to be like an angel of God, yet the weak will be like David, the sweet singer of Israel. O be encouraged to follow the Lord, every one of you, Sirs !"

Then to one of the elders of the parish, he said, "James, you are an old man, and I am dying ; yet I am dying old, old and satisfied with days ; the child is going to die a hundred years old. I am like a shock of corn fully ripe. I have ripened fast, but, O ! I have been under a bright sun, a day when the Son of Righteousness shines, and I have fine showers."

After a little silence, he said, "I have been sleeping, and I have awaked refreshed ; and now what shall I say ? I can say no more to commend the Lord, not for want of what to say, but for want of words with which to express it. Well, Sirs, ye will meet with difficulties and discouragements ; but this may encourage you, you see God owns his servants ; and should not his servants own him, and rejoice in him, and despise what enemies can do, when the Master does so much for them ? God has maintained my understanding, and my judgment, for the most important piece of work that ever I had. Blessed be God, my head and my heart are so sound. Though many a time a vain heart wandered, and carried me down the stream, yet I may say, the habitually determined desires of my soul, from the day that God first 'revealed his Son in me,' run out after him, and the remembrance of his name. And now I find he meets them that rejoice, and work righteousness ; Glory, glory to him. O what of God I see ! I never saw any thing like it. The beginning and end, Sirs, of religion are wonderfully sweet : 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace.' I am not calling myself perfect ; the Lord knows I am far from it ; I have found corrup-

tion stirring since you came in this morning." One said, "His dealing with you has been very uncommon." He answered, "Very uncommon indeed, if you knew all that I know; yea, but therein is the glory of the Lord, that he makes the weak strong; 'excellency of the power' is the more remarkably seen." The other replied, "There is a borrowed perfection." He answered, "Yea, yea; that is perfection; glory to him for that perfection." The other adding, "And as all our righteousness comes from him, so does all our strength." He said, "Yea, yea, now may ye all ascribe to him the honour of his name; may ye be all engaged by this unto the Lord himself, and established in his way; the glory is his, his only, and engagement of heart, as consequent to the discovery, should be to him only: 'Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory.' O the sweetness of a Creator to a creature!"

Having continued his discourse for some time to those about him, he said, "O this is the most honourable pulpit that ever I was in! I am preaching the same Christ, the same holiness, the same happiness I did before. I have much satisfaction, in that I am not ashamed of the Gospel I preached; I was never ashamed of it all my days: and I am not ashamed of it at the last, when I am put to the trial in the bed of languishing. Blessed be God, we are all agreed in that, that it is the power of God to salvation."

After that, to a minister who had come from Edinburgh, he said, "Now, tell my honest friends at Edinburgh, tell them what God has done for my soul, and encourage them to hold on their way, they are a blessed seed; and besides these, to Christian acquaintances, I am very willing it should be told how good God has been to me. Are we ashamed of the Gospel? Will these experiences of the reality of religion be driven out of our minds? Here I am now a man, a weak man, in hands with the king of terrors, rejoicing in the hopes of the glory that is to be revealed, and that by the death and resurrection of a despised Christ." That minister answered, "Sir, I believe you know that your friends at Edinburgh will be very well satisfied, that mercy from the Lord has been shown to you." He replied, "All that fear God may be glad. Indeed, as strength would allow, when the beginning of this trouble was on me, I aimed at that, Show me a token for good; and indeed, I think God has shown me a token for good."

Then to some present, he said, "It is an evil time this; I will tell you, Sirs, it was this evil time that has helped on all this; it has weighed on my spirit, the dark prospect was so uneasy. But, perhaps, I took more care than I should have done. We trust God too little. I sought my judgment, and he has continued my judgment." Then he desired a minister to pray, and said, "O let us exalt his name. 'Truly the lines are fallen in pleasant places, and I have gotten a goodly heritage.' Now pray; but be short, because I find a great alteration on my body; and praise him, O praise him, 'praise is comely.'"

After prayer, he said, "Christ is exalted; death is not terrible, death is unstung; the curse of the fiery law is done away."

To a gentlewoman, he said, "I long for his salvation; I bless his name I have found him; I am taken up in blessing him; I am dying rejoicing in the Lord; well, I long to be in the promised land."

He, apprehending himself to be very low, said, "Here I die: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit: come, sweet Lord Jesus, receive this spirit fluttering within my breast like a bird to be out of a snare. When will I hear him say, 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; the winter is past,

the rain is over and gone?' &c. Come, sweet Lord Jesus, come, and take me by the hand, that I stumble not in the dark valley of death." One said, "He has been pleased to set his love upon you, and he will help you through in this last conflict; for his word is still the same: 'I will never, never leave, nor forsake you;' 'he is able to save to the uttermost.'" He answered, "I know that."

A little after, the other said, "we have, brother, such a view of his love and glory that shall be revealed, that shall excite to praise and thanksgiving, that will be the eternal song of the redeemed. You are beginning that song now." He answered, "Ay, ay, blessed be his name."

Then he prayed, and said, "Pity me, and let me depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

When a minister said, "Do you desire one of us to pray?" He answered, "Yea, yea, pray that I may get comfortably over." One said, "He has need of some refreshment." He answered, "I have meat to eat. Pray," said he, "that like a good soldier, I may strike the last stroke."

After that, he said, "I wait for thy salvation." How long? come, sweet Lord Jesus: O come! sweet Lord Jesus, take me by the hand." Then he caused a minister to pray, and said, "Pray, pray, and praise."

After that, he said, "Come, Lord Jesus; I have waited for thy salvation. I wait for thy salvation, as the watchmen watcheth for the morning. I am weary with delay. I faint for thy salvation. Why are his chariot-wheels so long a-coming? He is trying my patience, he is trying my patience. O what means he to stay so long? I am like to faint with delay."

Then having revived a little, he said, "Draw the curtains about me, and let me see what he has a mind to do with me." This done, after silence for some time, he said, "Whence is this to me? There is a strange change within this half-hour. Ah!" said he, "I am like to be restored to health again: I am afraid for it, and tremble at this. O what sort of providence is this? I was in hopes to have been at the end of my voyage: and now I am detained with a cross wind. I desire to be patient under his hand; but he must open my heart to glorify him." Then he said, "Pray for me, pray for me, that none that fear him may be ashamed on my account."

After that, he said, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwells.—Thou that knowest all things knowest that I love thee, Lord, I may not want thee."

Then to the ministers, he said, "Brethren, go and pray to the Lord for me." One said, "Brother, I am not disappointed in that reviving you got. The Lord calls for submission to his will; he does all things well; he has given you wonderful assistance hitherto." He answered, "I find corruption vigorous and strong, so that I have no reason to quit my post, no not for half an hour."

Afterwards he said, "O that I could bless the Lord; such a wonder of mercy as I have been made!" When he was breathing forth a passionate longing after his dissolution, one said to him, "You have reason to account God's goodness to you very surprising, since now these three days past you have had so much of sensible comfort, without interruption, and some of the greatest men in the Church of Scotland, have been sore and long vexed with desertion, and have not had at death the half of your consolation, have not got the half of these manifestations that you have had." He answered,

“His loving-kindness is indeed marvellous to me: ‘What am I, O what am I, that he has brought me hitherto!’ What I have is not a vivid and very sensible joy; yet I bless, I bless his name, I am much composed, and have solid clear scriptural manifestations of God, and the things of God.”

To the apothecary, he said, “I thought to have been away, and I am come back again: I am glad to be gone, not that I am wearied: He has not allowed a fretting thought to vex me. O, I am a monument, a monument of the power of God! My trouble is great, but I am helped to bear it: and in so far, I am a martyr, as well as a witness. My great desire has been, for many years, to suffer for the truth of our religion; and now God has given me the greatest honour, to be a living witness to it, and a monument of it, that we ‘have not followed cunningly devised fables.’ I will be in heaven shortly; I will come there by the word of my testimony, and the blood of the Lamb. All is of grace; he has chosen me, called me, justified me, and sanctified me, by his grace: ‘He gives grace and glory;’ these are precious gifts.”

Then he said to the ministers, after many apologies, that he, as a dying man, begged them to request of the ensuing synod, that they would keep up brotherly love, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and with the utmost care avoid divisive measures, whatever temptations they might be under to them. “I am concerned,” said he, “as long as I am in life, for the church; I even pity you: O let all of us abide by him! O that the ministry of Scotland may be kept from destroying the kirk of Scotland! O that I could obtain it of them with tears of blood, to be concerned for the church! Shall we be drawn away from the precious gospel, and from Christ?”

To one of the students, he said, “If I had you, lads, all about me now, I would give you a lesson of divinity: however, this will be a standing witness of the reality, solidity, power, and efficacy of those truths I taught you; for, by the power of that grace revealed in those truths, here I lie pained without pain, without strength and yet strong. I think it would not be a lost session this, though you were all here.”

To a citizen, he said, “Sir, I am a monument of the great goodness of God: there are but a few names in this place that set their faces heavenward; be encouraged to go on. The Lord bless you and your family; you have been a kind neighbour.” Then he said, “They ‘that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.’ I am planted in the house of God; here is an evidence of it, I am but young, and yet ‘the child is going to die an hundred years old.’ In winter last, I thought I was going to be cast as a withered branch over the wall; and now the dead stock that was cut, has budded again, and grown a tall cedar in Lebanon.”

After a pause, he said, “My body complains of pain, but I complain of none. I was never more myself all my life, than in this sickness; I was never more indebted to grace. Ah! I mistook myself, O cursed self! I would have been too easily let away without all this suffering, and yet I am wasting away to heaven; I thought to get away with this rubbish; but my God sees meet to purge me of all my dross; he is keeping me, and he will have me as ‘gold purified seven times,’ ere I go hence; and I will be well purged, and get fair clean garments, washed, and ‘made white in the blood of the Lamb;’ and the enemy that accused Joshua, the high-priest, dare not accuse me for filthy garments: yet not unto us, not unto us: O there

is a beauty there! Would you have a mark of a true Christian? here it is, to strike at the bearing down of self in all its most subtle actings. I am full of sores," said he, "but all my bones shall praise him."

Then he pressed the ministers to discourse to him, and said, "I desire to hear the word read, the word preached. Many times, when I thought on the worthies that lived in the days of old, I said, I was as one born out of due time; but now I think I am born in due time, for I shall see Jesus, O sweet Jesus, that delivers from the wrath to come! I will see Elijah and Moses, the great Old Testament prophets; I will see the two great Mediators, the type and the antitype. The three disciples got a sweet and glorious sight of Christ in his transfiguration; this was indeed an edifying and confirming sight, allowed to the disciples for strengthening their faith against the objections of the unbelieving Jews, and the staggering trials they were shortly to meet with. Was he despised as a mean and mere man, and his Godhead disowned? Lo! here he appears in divine majesty and glory. Did they say that he was against the law? Lo! here Moses, by whom the law was given, paying respect unto him. Did they say that he was not the promised Messias foretold by the prophets? Lo! here Elijah, the greatest zealot among the Old Testament prophets, owning and honouring him. Was he reproached as a deceiver of the people? Lo! the voice from heaven saith, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.' Yet this sight was of short continuance, and terrible while it lasted. But in heaven we shall have a more glorious and abiding sight, we shall behold 'his glory, we shall be made like unto him, for we shall see him as he is: Lo! this is our God, and we have waited for him!' When his people are in trouble, the wicked say, Where is your God; but wait the issue, till their deliverance come, and then they can say, Lo! this is our God. O, said he, I am full of matter, I know not where to begin or end: the Spirit of the Lord has been mighty with me; O the book of God is a solemn thing! It is written within and without! I never studied it to the half of what I should; but God has given me much of it together. Never was I more uneasy in my life, and yet I was never more easy; all my bones are like to break, they stick through my skin, a hand is a burden to me, my mouth is a burden, and yet all easy: 'Not unto us, not unto us.' O there is a beauty there!"

Then to his wife, he said, "O my sweet bird, are you there? I am no more thine; I am the Lord's. I remember, on the day I took you by the hand, I thought on parting with you; but I wist not how to get my heart off you again, but now I have got it done. Will not you give me to the Lord, my dear?" Then, seeing her very sad, he said, "My dear, do not weep, you should rather rejoice: rejoice with me, and let us exalt his name together—I will be in the same family with you—you must even stay a while behind, and take care of God's children"

In the night-time, he said, "Ah! St Andrews, I am afraid it is coming to that with it, that the power of religion will wear quite out among professors in St Andrews, and that they will not seek after the influences of the Spirit in ordinances."

When wakened out of sleep, he said, "I am lying pleasantly, and waiting patiently till he finish and perfect what concerns me. God is with me still, and he will be with me: I will be cold within a little, and I long for it, I long for my dissolution. O who would not lie in this state, till they be all wasted away?" One said, "You will be sore lying." He answered,

“ I have no sores, he has bound up all my wounds. ‘ The gods that the blinded nations fear are but lying vanities, but the God of Israel, the Portion of Israel, is not like them.’ I am now in the hands of the king of terrors, and within a little I will be out of them : I am now hand in hand to grapple with the last enemy, and I find it is a conquerable enemy. I am ‘ more than a conqueror.’ ” One said, “ A strange champion indeed ! ” He answered, “ I ! not I, but the grace of God in me ; ‘ by the grace of God I am what I am.’ The God of peace hath bruised Satan under my feet. Ye see affliction is no mark of God’s displeasure : I often wondered how the martyrs could clap their hands in the fire ; I do not wonder at it now : I could clap my hands, though you would hold burning candles about them : and think it no hardship, though the flames were going round about them ; and yet I would cry, and not be able to bear it, if ye would but touch my toe, if the Lord withdrew his presence.”

Then he said to one, after a shock he had, “ Find you any alteration in my pulse with this ? ” “ No, it is as vigorous as yesterday.” “ Well,” said he, “ I will wait cheerfully.” One said, “ You are well hired to it, as ye used to say yourself.” He answered, “ I am so. I will wait till I be all wasted away ; but my tongue is my glory, to ‘ render the calves of my lips.’ God has given me my head and my tongue to praise his name. I lost my spirits : God has given me my spirits again.”

September 21. About three in the morning, he said, “ And is it the Sabbath, then ? My pleasant George on a Sabbath night went into his rest. I bestowed him on my God. Blessed be his name, he made me content. I would even have given him all my children that way, and I hope it shall be so ; blessed be his name.”

After a little pause, he said, “ Shall I forget Zion ? nay, let ‘ my right hand forget her cunning, if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chiefest joy.’ O, to have God returning to this church, and his work going on in the world : if every drop of my blood, every part of my body, every hair of my head, were all men, they should go to the fire to have this going on.”

And after that, to some, he said, “ O Sirs, I could not believe that I could have borne, and borne cheerfully, this rod so long ; this is as a miracle, pain without pain ; and this is not a fancy of a man disordered in his brain, but of one lying in full composure. O blessed be God that ever I was born ! I have a father, a mother, and ten brethren and sisters, in heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. O blessed be the day that ever I was born ! O if I were where he is ! and yet, for all this, God’s withdrawing himself from me would make me as weak as water. All this I enjoy, though it be miracle upon miracle, would not make me stand without new supplies from God. The thing I rejoice in is, that it is altogether full, and that in the Mediator Christ Jesus, there is all the fulness of the Godhead, and it will never run out.”

After some time’s silence, some having heard him groaning, he said, “ It is not for pain I am groaning, but for the poor kirk of Scotland, and for the cup of indignation in the Lord’s hand that is going about. I have been days, weeks, and months, in terror, thinking what I would do in the days of pestilence ; but now I see in him there is safety, and that an invisible God can keep from a visible stroke ; but, O it is a strange thing to consider how an unbelieving heart could not trust him ! but now I am kept ‘ in perfect peace. The name of the Lord is a strong tower ;’ here is a strong tower. And he that dwells under the shadow of the Most High,

shall abide, and not be afraid. O the book of God, Sirs, is a rich treasure, a sweet book ; make all much use of your Bibles."

Then to his wife, he said, "O wait upon him, for he is a good God to his own, and he never takes any thing from them, but he gives them as good, and better, back again ; you will get himself. My dear, we have had many a sweet day together ; we must part for a while, but we will meet again, and shall have one work in the praises of God, in the praises of the Lamb. O how wonderful is it ! and let my soul wonder. O ! to get a discovery of him, eye to eye ! it is so much enlivening. 'It is life eternal to know the living God, and Jesus Christ.' I will not say with Job, 'When it is morning, when will it be evening ?' no, I dare not say it : It will be but a little while, and I will get rest."

Then to some present, he said, "Do ye think that he will come and receive the 'prisoner of hope' this day ? Whether he do or not, holy and righteous is he ; but I confess I long for it. This is vastly more that I am bearing, than many deaths, and yet the Lord bears me up sweetly with his power. Were it not the power of grace, nature would distract, under what I have upon me even now ; but the Lord upholds me. I do not weary ; but the hireling longs for his wages. He seems, in his adorable wisdom, to try me further, and holy and reverend is his name ; he is not wanting to me." One said, "Well, that is enough, if he is now giving you a heavy burden to bear, he gives you such remarkable support." He said, "I desire only grace to 'be faithful to the death' unto the Lord Jesus, unto my God, until I come to the land of praises, even to Jerusalem's gates, to pay thanks to the name of the God of Jacob." One said, "You have his promise for sustaining you to the end, and he cannot fail in performing it. I hear the defluxion has been uneasy to you last night." He answered, "Yea, yea ; but O keep me from impatience, or charging my God foolishly." One said, "It is weak faith that cannot believe, when it has such a support of sensible comfort as you have." He answered, "The hundredth part of this trouble would have put me into distraction, if the Lord had not sustained me. This is his day, it is his holy rest. I long for the rest ; I long for this desirable rest." One said, "Well, you have reached a will submissive to his." He answered, "It takes a great deal of hammering to polish us, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

To his son he said, "My dear, David, I am lying here, finding how good God is ; and I would fain have my David, I would fain have you God's, and acquainted with his way, that when I am dead, I may live in you, and you may tell to the generation not born, how good God is. O man ! if I had you a seeker of God, I would think myself happy in it." Then a minister asked if he should pray : he answered, "Yea, yea, pray for me."

After prayer, he said, "This night my skin has burnt, my heart has panted, my body has been bruised on the bed with weakness, and there is a sore upon me that is racking my spirit, and my heart has been sometimes like to fail ; and yet I cannot say but the Lord, after all this trouble, holds me in health in the midst of all. If the Lord should give such support, and continue me years in this case, I have no reason to complain." One said, "No hypocrite is able to counterfeit that language in such a case as you are in." He answered, "It is as great a wonder to me, as to any about me. Brother, I know not whether I may not desire you to beg of

the Lord, with respect to this poor body, even to pity, and to shorten my trial, if it be his will; the hireling longs for his wages; but I have reason to do it with submission."

Thereafter he said, "My body has got such a hurt, that I believe I will scarce recover it; and that is the thing that keeps all my body in a fire. The panting for want of breath is over; but O it is the mercy of God that keeps me composed. This trouble of my bowels draws my stomach all together, as if it were with cords: and yet I must say, 'What an I, and what is my father's house, that God has brought me hither!'" One said, "You have resigned yourself to his will and pleasure; and he will strengthen you with patience; he gives strength for the burden." He answered, "He has done it hitherto, I have a heart warm to God, and I have a carnal heart too." One said, "Corruption will remain while in the body." He answered, "But I long to be away, to get a deliverance." One said, "In due time that will come." Then he said, "I am lying here, and the Lord helps me to wait for that consolation that is in Christ, that will fill me with admiration to eternity: but I have already the pleasant peaceable fruits of righteousness, and sweet composure. I had what was worse than a thousand deaths, and he has held me by the hand."

To the ministers, he said, "The Lord has been still with me. I am carnal, but I long for a deliverance from the remainders of a body of sin. I long for a deliverance from this trouble; if God lengthen it out, if he gives more troubles, then why not? righteous is his name. I know not what alteration may be. I long indeed for that everlasting rest; and I confess I am like a bird on the wing, and I would fain be at Immanuel's land, where the tree of life is. Well, all this is encouragement to you to acquaint yourself with God; you see religion is advantageous, 'great is the gain of godliness.' All these soft clothes are like sacking about me; and yet I have perfect ease of spirit. My breast is drawing together, as sore as it were with cords; and still the Lord keeps me in composure. What is this! I could have scarce believed, though I had been told it, that I could have been kept in the right exercise of my judgment under this racking pain. The drawing of the breast seems to me to be, as if I were all hung together, all pulled together: so that I would make that improvement, whatever come of it, I am sure I am a demonstration, that there is a reality in religion; and I rejoice in this, that God has honoured a sinful worm, so as to be a demonstration of his grace. I am preaching the Gospel, I have a dispensation committed to me; shame belongs to me; I am a sinner, the praise of all belongs to him—'worthy is the Lamb to receive glory.' I hope I shall shortly be at that glory, I have been long expecting it! though I come not near Mr Shield's glory, nor Mr Anderson's; only, O if I were in heaven, I will be well enough when I get in. Dear friends about me, take the commendation of my hand; while I live, I must preach the Gospel. He has yet given me time here, that I should still commend him. The word speaks, providence speaks in me; and if there be a despising of the Gospel under this new discovery, take heed, it will still make it the worse with you. Glory to him that ever he revealed himself in me: he is free in his love. I was wallowing in my blood; but he passed by, and cast his skirt over me."

To two ministers that tarried with him when the rest went to the church, he said, "I would desire a word read, and prayer; and if my head could endure, I would fain hear singing. I do not now find any change, but there

may be; and I am the less concerned, because the Lord in some measure has taken away that inclination to limit him as to the hour; though you may be sure the hireling longs for his wages." He caused them to read Psalm lxxxiv. and sing the latter part of it, and pray. And after prayer, he having joined in singing, said, "I had always a mistuned voice, a bad ear; but, which is worst of all, a mistuned heart; but shortly, when I join the temple-service above, there shall not be, world without end, one string of the affections out of tune." And after that, he caused one of the ministers to read to him what Dr Owen had said of this temple-service above, in his book on the Person of Christ. Often this day did he bless God he had been helped to give such a testimony to God's ways.

To some that came from church, he said, "You have been in the assembly of God's people, the desirable assembly wherein communion and fellowship with the Father and Son may be attained; and all these enjoyments are among the most valuable to be had here, and they are the way to our rest, which remains for the people of God: but, O! to be joined with the company above. How amiable are thy tabernacles, even here! but more so above, where there is the eagle's eye, that can see a glorious light, even the light of the Lord. Now, our faith, even at its highest elevation here, when it looks to these things, they are so great, that we pass from our compareance, we are not able to behold them. Now, I hope in God; and blessed be his name, though I was once well near the saying, 'My hope, my strength, is perished from the Lord,' yet the Lord rebuked that. My unbelief was very impudent in urging suggestions. A shadow of a difficulty, will frighten and overthrow me. I am nothing, less than nothing, a vile sinner; but mercy does all, I bless his name; and he himself has said it, and done it; and now I am lying his debtor, not able to pay a mite of it."

Then to the ministers, he said, "Now I would fain hear, Sirs, hear of the gospel, hear of Christ." On which the ministers present discoursed a while on the promise of God, the faith and experience of the saints in former times. "The Lord," said he, "has indeed dealt wonderfully with me; he has taken me out of 'the miry clay, and set my feet on a rock;' he has come in the watches of the night, and calmed the waves of the raging sea. I expected no smile when I took this trouble; and many a time I have been this winter at saying, I am like to be a branch that is withered, and cast over the hedge. I brought all this difficulty on myself; and I thought, if I could get away creeping with terror, to be plunged into eternity with a peradventure, it was fair; 'praise is comely;' I am one of the chief of sinners, yet very kindly dealt with; 'whence is this to me!'"

At night, he said, "There will be a change." One said, "Yea, no doubt of that; your defluxion is already dried up." He said, "I take shiverings, but I am hopeful it is my deliverance coming, under the conduct of the great Captain of salvation. I'll shake hands with the king of terrors, though one fit of sickness would but take away my tongue, another my ear, another my throat, I will be content." One said, "That is a mercy." He said, "Yea, yea, the troubled sea, a mind fretting, rising up in rebellion against God, is uneasy. I bless him I obtained that mercy in the violence of my trouble; he kept me from daring to entertain a harsh thought of him, he held me by the hand: and I see now what corruption is, even when under the most of God and his goodness: I have been kept under a continual fear of my ill heart. These are the two worst enemies I have, self, with its fair shows, secret insinuations, and unbelief,

struggling hard against me. It is a mercy he gives me now and then, when I am able to speak, leave to follow the old employment, to preach and to commend Christ: I think he has given me good cause. Sometimes I find it safer for my body and head, to hear others speaking."

After he had lain quiet a little, to his wife, he said, "O my dear, I was just praying for you and your children, and commending you to your God, and my God, to our fathers' God." Being much troubled with the cough, he said, "There are no coughs in heaven."

In the night-time, he caused read the songs of degrees, and said, "They were so called by some, because they were sung on the steps of the stair that led up to the temple: and," said he, "what meeter to be read to a poor sinner, that aims at climbing up the hill of God, where the temple of God is. Under the Old Testament, it was only the high-priest that was to enter within the most holy place, and that once a-year, and not without blood; but now there is a way opened into the holiest of all for every believer."

One said, "I thought, Sir, you was expressing your fears respecting the times." He answered, "Yes, indeed; I am no prophet, I am not positive on the head; but I greatly fear a heavy stroke is coming on this land, I fear the plague of God is coming on Scotland." One said, "The pestilence, Sir, do you mean?" He said, "Yes, indeed, and a bloody sword also. Nay, it is what I feared these several years, and I abide by it, I am of the same mind still; and I do not see what way it is avoidable without a miracle; and a miracle I do not expect: But seek to be established in the truth. These are like to be trying times."

September 22. At half-past one, he asked what hour it was, and said, "Early in the morning—my friends should be acquainted, because I do expect this cough will hasten the deliverance; the Lord can do it speedily, but in the mean time he will give me rest, rest with himself. What needs a poor creature, that hath a prospect of such a rest, weary of outward trouble? I am lying very composedly, glory to his name! I hope I am going to the land where there is a calm." One said, "You have no reason to doubt of that." He said, "No, no."

Then he renewed his discourse on the state of the church, and said, "Zion has been much upon my heart; I have had much trouble about the poor kirk of Scotland; O what will come of it, and the town of St Andrews!" Then he expressed his fears of a stroke coming on all the churches, that God was about to give them a terrible shake. One said, "If so, I would fain hope it may be Antichrist's last stroke. He answered, "Perhaps it may be so." He spoke of Mr Hooker's Denunciation of Wrath against England, which is mentioned in the History of New England. "And," said he, "we are going to unite with the sins of France; what ground of fear may this be? I fear persecution by the Popish party." One said, "However, it is the more hopeful, that the reformed churches are likely to be joined with us in the trial." He answered, "But I am very apprehensive God is about to sift the reformed churches indeed. Well, well," said he, "I will get out of the dark cloud; within a little, I will be in Abraham's bosom; yea, in the bosom of him that 'carries the lambs in his bosom;' and I am sure of goodness and mercy in great store, even all that is laid up for his people, to follow me. O he is good to a poor worm, 'the chief of sinners!' 'O! let us exalt his name together;' it is the constant employment of all above, 'they cease not day nor night,' they see

and sing, they have a clear vision. O if I saw his lovely face, that is 'fairer than the sons of men,' yea, that is beyond the sun at noon-day! O to be where there is no sin! How sweet has even this bed been, though sin remains, and my trouble is great! yet I have been composed in the midst of my trouble. He can give heaven in the worst of cases. What shall I say? How shall I conceal his goodness?"

Thinking on the students of divinity, who were then separate in time of vacation, he dictated a letter, to be communicated to them at their next meeting; a copy of which follows.

"Dearly beloved in our Lord, my joy and hope, and the hope, shall I say, of the kirk of Scotland.

"YOU are devoted to the study of the gospel, for preserving a seed to serve the Lord in the kirk of Scotland, in order to the continuance of the gospel with the rising generation. A prospect this is of the highest concern, the most honourable service you can ever be employed in. In this study, weakly as I could, I endeavoured to assist you, 'according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' in public, in private, to the utmost that a fading body would allow, and beyond; yet with much pleasure and satisfaction, in hopes that the Lord one day might make my weak labours, and your vigorous studies, through his blessing, useful in the church of God, a blessing to posterity, and a high honour to yourself. Want of health allowed me not what was in my heart to have done for your assistance and encouragement. And now I have no more left me, but to give a sincere testimony of my entire affection for you, and that I have really the yearnings of a parent's bowels towards you, by signifying in this short letter, when upon a death-bed, and near the confines of eternity, that you may vigorously ply that study, and rest not short of saving acquaintance with the power of divine truth, and experimental knowledge of the mystery of God and of Christ, diligently using all means that the 'word of God may dwell in you richly;' and that you may have treasures furnished richly with things new and old, and that ye may prove one day able ministers of the New Testament. But rest not, for the Lord's sake, and for your own souls' sake, in the bare fruits of your own study; but seek to be taught of God, that you may at once 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God.' Beware of curiosities and novelties in religion; adhere, as you will be answerable, unto the doctrine of the church of Scotland, sincerely taught by your worthy and judicious master, whom ye are happy in, if you know your own mercy, and have grace given you to improve it. This is a time of abounding errors; beware of drinking them in, beware of an assuming boldness in the matters of God. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What man fears God, God will teach him the secret of his covenant.' I have not time nor strength, being by the Lord's hand cut short, to write my mind distinctly to you; but since I am now very near eternity, loaded with the riches of God's goodness, I could not but by this letter signify my sincere desire, that you may be nourished up in the words of truth, and that you may use wholesome food, and be kept from poison. I recommend to you, among human writings, for a true view of the mystery of the gospel, those especially of the great Dr Owen; but the word of God, in dependence upon the Spirit of God, must be your study and meditation day and night. Words cannot express what I have found of God, since I came to this bed of languishing, what advantage I have found of having aimed at

following that God, that truth, that gospel, which I recommend to you ; and therefore am bold to recommend to you this as the most noble, honourable, advantageous work in which you can be employed ; and I am this day sure, from experience, that it is better to serve the Lord in the gospel of his Son, than to serve the greatest princes on earth in the highest station. If God help you in his service to be faithful, the reward is too great to be expressed. My thoughts, my words are swallowed up, and my affections towards you is such, that my body would quite sink to speak what is on my heart of love to you, and desire to have you acquainted with my dearest Lord, to whom I always was deeply obliged, but now am so much indebted, that I fear to mention how good he has been to my soul. O choose him, cleave to him, serve him, study to know more and more of him, live in communion with him ! Never rest till you reach eternal communion with him. This is all from your dying master. I have desired my brother-in-law to sign this in my name. A death-bed will excuse confusion. I wish nothing more than that, after you have done much service to the church here, I may have the happiness to hear you approved of by the great Shepherd of the sheep.

“THO. HALYBURTON”

To a minister, he said, “ I think, brother, my case is a pretty fair demonstration of the immortality of the soul.” One said, “ Your case may be confounding to atheists.” Then he said, “ Glory, glory for support, continued support, to the chief of sinners. O that I could sing forth his praise ! Indeed I am patient, yet ‘ not I, but the grace of God in me.’ Not I, should always be at hand. Cursed self, cursed self, that robs God of his glory. Could I have believed, (but I am an unbelieving person,) that I could have had this pleasure and patience in this condition ! Once or twice, Satan was at the wrangling of my faith. I wakened in a sort of carnal frame, and I thought I had lost my jewel ; but now, I hope, he will stand by me to the end. If ever I was distinct in my judgment and memory in my life, it was since he laid his hand on me ; glory to him ; what shall I render to him ? my bones are cutting through my skin ; yet all my bones are praising him. ‘ I said, I am cast out of thy sight, but I will look again towards thy holy temple.’ The enemies of the gospel in St Andrews, shall have this among other things to answer for, that God has taken and singled me out for a monument of his mercy ; but the design and upshot of it is for the establishment and consolation of his own, and, I hope, for the engaging of some, may be, poor young things to God. Glory to the Captain of salvation, ‘ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory !’ There is no curse of a broken law here.”

To a minister that said, “ How are you, Sir, to-day ?” he answered, “ I bless his name, I am posting to eternity, to heaven.”

To a gentlewoman he said, “ Well, desirable neighbour, I am dying in a way that may confirm that God is good. Well, well, I am near heaven.” Then he fainted, and said, “ This is another messenger come for me.”

When he was to take a little refreshment, in asking a blessing, he used these following expressions : “ Glory to God in the highest, that there is good will to men, and peace on earth ; glory that life and immortality is brought to light. Help to put a crown on the Mediator’s head. It will be our glory to eternity, to run deeper and deeper in debt. Glory to God that a vile worm, ‘ the chief of sinners,’ is singled out to be a monument of his grace, and a proclaimer of his praise ! ‘ Who is a God like unto thee ?’ ” &c.

After he had taken the refreshment, he said, "Trust him to all eternity, credit his word. I listened to unbelief since I came to this bed, and it had almost killed me; but God rebuked it. I sought the victory by prayer; and God has given it; he is the hearer of prayer. I have not much more to do with death."

To one, he said, "Another messenger comes for me, a cough. O! I am kindly dealt with! The Lord has done wonderful things. Only grace to be sober to the end; for our strength lies in him. Not we, O! this is an up-making for the residue of my days. Well, thirty-eight years next December 25, is my age. Hezekiah said, I am cut off from the 'residue of my years;' but I will not say so. God is giving me this to make up the residue of my years. The Lord is even wasting away my body, to let me see, that my spirit can live without it. I will not weary, through his grace now. Brother, remember me, that the Lord may help me to honour him to the end. Ay, I will be washed, and get white robes, the crown on my head, and palms in my hands."

I am calling you to see a miracle, God is melting me down into corruption and dust, and yet he is keeping me in a calm. O! who is like unto our God? 'Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name, O Lord, be the praise. Our light afflictions, that endure but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' I will get the martyr's crown, with the minister of Christ's crown: and O but the martyr's crown is a glorious crown! I am now a witness for Christ, for the reality of religion; and I am suffering. 'It is given unto me, not only to believe, but to suffer for his name.' I sought an increase of faith from our Lord Jesus, and our Lord has heard me; and now it is but a little, and I'll get the crown. And though there be a little loathsomeness about me, yet I am willing that you be spectators of it; for it was not for my sake that I met with this, but for your establishment. Is there not a beauty in this providence?"

After wrestling with defluxion in his throat, he said, "The Lord has sent another messenger for me, to hasten me home. The other day I would have been away without this glorious evidence of the grace of God; but this is more for my advantage, that I am thus tried and comforted. I am hastening, and I will not complain of the slow paces of time. 'Why are his chariot-wheels so long a-coming?' But I will not say so any more: 'Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Come here, all ye that fear the Lord, and I'll tell you what he hath done for my soul.'" Then he caused a minister to pray, and said, "Pray that he may enable me for the last stroke, so that I may be 'a conqueror, and more than a conqueror.'"

To his son, he said, "David, come, O seek thy father's God. I am like the slave born in God's house, and I, my wife, and children, are the Lord's; therefore, let your ear be bored to his door-posts, and be his servants for ever: and if ye serve him, my God will bless you, he will bless you for ever. Come, my dear, your grandfather and grandmother are in heaven. Is it not hard to die well, for them that do not know God in Christ? If you knew the sore skin that I have, you would cry and weep; I am not weeping nor crying. How glad would I be, if I knew my little stock. David, would you be a witness for God, a sufferer for the name of Christ, 'striving and resisting even unto blood?' I would rather have you such, than

an emperor of the universe, and would rejoice more in it. Were I called to it, I would spend my blood, and go through fire and water for it."

Then he said, "If I would say, that I would speak no more in the name of the Lord, it would be like a fire within my breast. I was early musing with myself, how I would stand the shock, and be a martyr against Popery; I lay one night musing about it, and slept none."

When some looked to him as if they had been amazed, he said, "Why look ye steadfastly on me, as if by my might or power I were so? 'Not I, but the grace of God in me;' it is the Spirit of God that supports me. I am here on a death-bed, going to heaven. It is but a little time, and corruption will be raised in incorruption."

To his daughter, he said, "Margaret, I charge you to seek early the God of your father; he is a wonder-working God."

To his wife, he said, "Be not discouraged, my dear, at the unavoidable consequences of nature which I was under; it is an evidence that there is but a very little, and death will be swallowed up in victory; the body will be shaken into pieces. I am wasting away, blessed be God; and yet my head is as composed as it was before my sickness."

To another of his daughters, he said, "Janet, O seek God! he is good, he will be a better father than I am; you are born in his house. I have not a child, I have given you all to him; I leave you to the abundant grace of God. I am much concerned for the young generation; I fear they shall all disown religion together."

To a gentlewoman in the parish of Ceres, he said, "Behold your dying minister; I am hastening to eternity, and hastening to heaven as fast as I can; I am dying in the faith of those truths I preached among you; you may remember I preached on that text, 'When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble,' Hab. iii. 16. Then you may remember, I told you, that there was a rest to the Lord's people even in trouble; and now I will seal this rest. O! I am well hired to all this; I have perfect composure of spirit, perfect peace without any raving, or any thing that is the effect of disorder. O what wonderful power is that! Tell my parishioners that my God is blessing me, that the single attempts I made at serving him in preaching the gospel of his Son, the Lord has already rewarded them to a miracle: now I find the 'gospel the power of God to salvation,' all sorts of salvation. All in our religion is experimental, it will abide the proof. Well, mistress, God bless you, and bless your children, and make them a blessing to you; seek God, make earnest of religion. 'O what shall I render to the Lord?' Blessed be God that he gives so honourable an occasion to commend him."

To one of his children, he said, "If you forsake the God of your father, that has been so kind to me, this will be a witness against you; here I am a witness, that our 'Rock is not as their rock.'"

Then to some present, he said, "My moisture is much exhausted this night; but 'the dew lies all night on my branches, the dew that waits not for man, now tarries for the sons of men.' O what cannot grace do! how have I formerly fretted and repined at the hundredth part of the trouble I have on my body now! Here you see a man dying a monument of the glorious power of admirable, astonishing grace: and 'generations to come shall call me blessed.' Follow my advice, study the power of religion—it is the power of religion, and not a name, that will give the comfort I find.

Now, Sirs, here is something to be improved for a while, it will cost me telling to eternity. If there be such a glory in his conduct about me now, O what will be in that, 'to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to see the Lamb that was slain in the midst of the throne, the Lamb that has the seven horns, and the seven eyes!' I have peace in the midst of pain; and O how much of that I have had for a time past! My peace has been like a river, not a discomposed thought. There has been some little suggestions since I had the great assault of my enemies in one league together, I had one assault, and I was like to fall; but since the Lord rebuked them, there is not a discomposed thought, but a calm.

To the ministers, he said, "Brethren, bless God on my behalf, and pray I may be helped. I have been grappling with the king of terrors, and I find he is conquerable; I found the rattling of his drum in my throat, (meaning the choking defluxion in his throat,) and I was not affrighted: I am melting away."

To two of the students, he said, "Well, lads, you see your dying master confined within these four posts, and by the grace of God he is what he is: he is dying as one unto whom the Lord is showing himself marvellously good. This is no raving of a sick man: I bless God, I never had my judgment more distinct in all my days; an evidence of the reality of religion."

To a gentlewoman, he said, "You are come to see your old dying friend; a wonder indeed, but a wonder of mercy; I have preached from the pulpit, but now I am preaching from a death-bed; and I would be content, if his sensible presence were continued, to speak till flesh and bones were washed and wasted to nothing. Labour to get a clear view of him. The God of glory appeared to me; and the first sight I got of him was such, that it won my heart to him, so that it was never loosed: though I have had many wanderings, yet I can say, I was never myself till I got back to the centre again. Follow me, take my word for it, he is a good Master, ye will never repent the service; and I am well hired to it." He took a little rattle in his throat, and said, "This may be irksome to you; but every messenger of death is pleasant to me, and I am only detained here, that I may trumpet forth his praise a little longer."

About noon, he said, "I was just thinking on the pleasant spot of earth that I will get to lie in, beside Mr Rutherford, Mr Forrester, Principal Anderson, &c. and I will come in as the little one among them, and I will get my pleasant George in my hand; and O we will be a knot of comely dust!" Then he said, "It will not be all my sore bones that will make me weary yet, as long as God gives me a tongue to speak, and judgment to conceive, to preach his gospel."

He broke out in frequent admiration, with the greatest warmth at what he felt. "Strange," said he, "this body is wasting away to corruption, and yet my intellects are so lively, that I cannot say there is the least alteration, the least decay of judgment or memory; such vigorous actings of my spirit toward God, and things that are not seen; but," said he, "'Not I, not I, but the grace of God in me. Not unto us, not unto us;' which still I must have on my heart, since cursed self is apt to steal glory from God;—here I must watch, lest the enemy give me a wound."

Then to some ministers, when they came in, he said, "What a demonstration has God given you and me of the immortality of the soul, by the vigour of my intellects, and the lively actings of my spirit after God, and the things of God, now when my body is low, and also pained."

At night he felt very weak, and after a sore conflict, prayer being ended, he said, "Ebenezer." One said, "The Lord has helped hitherto, and he will help."

Some time thereafter, he said, "Good is the will of the Lord, and every one of these throes is good, and I must not want one of them; I must not flee from my post, but stand as a sentinel, for this is my particular work: this would be a hard work without Christ, but it is easy, having him the Captain of salvation."

He complained of his head, but said, "In a battle there must be blood and dust; 'every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood.' It is meet I should be so hard put to it, that I may know to whom I owe my strength. O that I were at the throne above, that my glimmering sight were taken away, that this unsteady faith might terminate in perfect vision."

Then looking to a minister, he said, "This is gymnasium." And some who stood by asking what that word meant, he said, "It was a school for exercise, a place where they wrestled and fought naked; and I am in agony, and wrestling with the king of terrors." "But," said the minister, "you will obtain the victory through the Captain of salvation, who, you know, is able to keep what you have committed to him."

When he revived, after a severe shock, he said, "I am defeated;" and added, "I am shipwrecked into health again." One said, "But you have still a pleasant view of an end of all your pain and trouble, in that land 'where the inhabitant shall not say he is sick.'" At which he gave pleasant looks and smiles, and turned up his eyes and hands while he was not able to speak.

One said, "'Blessed are they that die in the Lord;' there is much that goes before, along with, and after it. 'We groan in this tabernacle, being burdened;' not simply that we would be dissolved, but 'clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.'" Then he said, "When I fall so low, that I am not able to speak, I will show you a sign of triumph when I am near glory, if I be able."

Then he was for a while very low, he swooned, and thereafter, as prayer was ended, he revived a little. One said, "Had you no trouble?" He answered, "No, I knew not where I was; I know nothing about it.—Yea, yea, 'he can do no iniquity.' It is meet there should be a trial. I am wonderfully helped beyond the power of nature. If my mouth be not wet every moment, it is hot as fire."

Then he said, "The conflict is pretty long, but blessed be he that gives patience. I am mightily spent." One said, "Shall we pray a short word?" He answered, "Yes."

Afterwards, one said, "That tabernacle will be repaired again in a more glorious manner. Our vile bodies will be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Then he said, "I am very well pleased if the Lord take me away now. The Lord has allowed me long exercise of thoughts about my condition."

A little after that, he said, "Lord, pity."

Long after, being like to vomit, he said, "I am effectually choked." Then he said, "I desire to adhere to the Lord;—but I am like to be quite choked with defluxion." He had elevated looks, and cried, "Pity, pity, Lord!"

To his wife, he said, "My dear, be not discouraged, though I should go away in a fainting fit, the Lord's way is the best way; and I am composed."

To some others, he said, "You need not be discouraged, Sirs; what if I should go away with a fit of vomiting or fainting, it is all one. I did not know whether I was up or down."

After that, he said, "Though my body be sufficiently teased, yet my spirit is untouched."

One said, "You seem to be near the crown that you have been wrestling so long for." He cried, "Free grace, free grace, not unto me." Speaking of his body, he said, "Why should it not go to dust?"

One said, "You have been crying much to God, that he would be with you; and I doubt not but you are finding it now." He said, "Yes." One said, "Now you are putting your seal to that truth, that great is the gain of godliness." He answered, "Yes, indeed." One said, "And I hope you are encouraging yourself in the Lord." As a sign of it, he lifted up his hands and clapped them, when he could not speak.

Then in a little he went to the land where the weary are at rest.

He spoke little the last six hours before his death, only some broken sentences, which with difficulty were understood; but urged the ministers present with him to discourse to him, and often cried, "Pray, pray;" which was done by five or six ministers, till he fell asleep in the Lord, which was about seven in the morning, September 23, 1712.

FINIS.

